

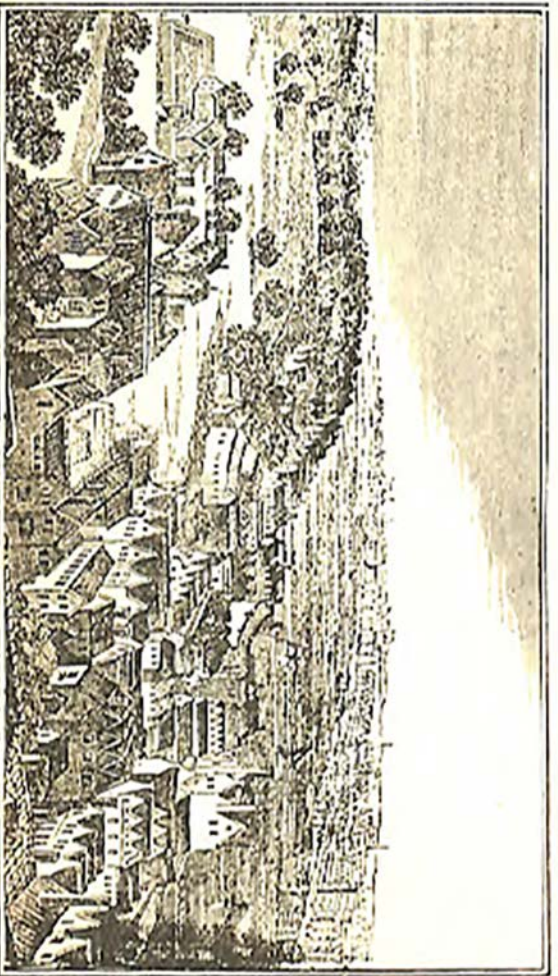
THE
HAUNTS...
OF OLD...
COCKAIGNE

BY
ALEX. M. THOMPSON

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THE HAUNTS OF
OLD COCKAIGNE



WANKSIDE IN 1648 (FLAG FLYING OVER GLOBE THEATRE).

THE HAUNTS OF OLD COCKAIGNE

BY

ALEX. M. THOMPSON
(DANGLE)

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AN EPISTLE DEDICATORY

MY DEAR WILL RANSTEAD,—

When, in our too infrequent talks, I have confessed my growing fondness for life in London, your kindly countenance has assumed an expression so piteous that my Conscience has turned upon what I am pleased to call my Mind, to demand explanation of a feeling so distressing to so excellent a friend.

My Mind, at first, was disposed to apologise. It pleaded its notoriously easy-going character: it had never met man or woman that it had not more or less admired,

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nor remained long anywhere without coming to strike kinship with the people and to develop pride in their activities.

In its infancy it had been as Badisch as the Grossherzog of Baden, and had deemed lilac-scented Karlsruhe the grandest town in the world.

In blue-and-white Lutetia, it had grown as Parisian as an English dramatist.

When the fickle Fates moved it on to Manchester, it had learned in a little while to ogle Gaythorn and Oldham Road as enchanted Titania ogled her gentle joy, the loathly Bottom. It had looked with scorn on the returned prodigals who had been to London—"to tahn," they called it—and who came back to their more or less marble halls in Salford with trousers turned up round the hems, shepherds' crooks to support their elegantly languid totter, and words of

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withering scorn for the streets of Peter and Oxford, which my Mind had learned to regard as boulevards of dazzling light.

Mine had always been a pliant and affable mind. Perhaps if it lived in Widnes it might prefer it to Heaven.

But the longer I remained in London the more convinced I became that never again should I like Widnes, or Manchester, or Paris, or Carlsruhe, as well as this tantalising, fascinating, baffling city of misty light—this stately, monstrous, grey, grimy, magnificent London.

Then I sought reason for my state, and the following papers — one or two contributed to the *Liverpool Post*, one to the *Clarion*, and the most part printed now for the first time — are the result of my inquiries.

One day I found cause for liking London,

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another day the reverse. As the reasons came to me I wrote them down, and with all their inconsistencies upon their heads, you have them here collected.

I have addressed the papers to you, because :—

As you had inspired the book, it was only fair you should share the blame.

By answering you publicly, I saved myself the trouble of separately answering many other country friends who likewise looked upon my love of London as a deplorable falling from grace.

Thirdly, by this means, I save postages, and may actually induce a few adventurous moneyed persons to pay me for the work.

Lastly, and most seriously, I lay hold on this occasion to publish the respect and gratitude I owe to you, and which I

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repay to the best of my ability by this small token of my friendship. — Sincerely yours,

ALEX. M. THOMPSON.

P.S.—You will naturally wonder after reading the book—should you be spared so long—why I call it *Haunts of Old Cockaigne*.

I may say at once that you are fully entitled to wonder.

It is included in the price.

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LONDON'S ENCHANTMENT

I want the hum of my working brothers—
London bustle and London strife.

H. S. LEIGH.

LET them that desire "solitary to wander
o'er the russet mead" put on their clump
boots and wander.

I prefer the Strand.

The Poet's customary meadow with its
munching sheep and æsthetic cow, his
pleasing daisies and sublimated dandelions,
his ecstatic duck and blooming plum tree,
are all very well in their way; but there is
more human interest in Seven Dials.

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The virtuous man who on the sunless side
Of a romantic mountain, forest crowned,
Sits coolly calm ; while all the world without,
Unsatisfied, and sick, tosses at noon—

may have a very good time if his self-satisfaction suffice to shelter him from Boredom ; but of what use is he to the world or to his fellow-creatures ?

I have no patience with the long-haired persons whose scorn of the common people's drudgery finds vent in lofty exhortations to "fly the rank city, shun the turbid air, breathe not the chaos of eternal smoke, and volatile corruption."

By turning his back to "the tumult of a guilty world," and "through the verdant maze of sweetbriar hedges, pursue his devious walk," the Poet provides no remedy for the sin and suffering of human cities—especially if the Poet finds it inconvenient to his

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soulful rapture to attend to his own washing.

It offends me to the soul to hear robustious, bladder-pated, tortured Bunthornes crying out for "boundless contiguity of shade" where they can hear themselves think, when they might be digging the soil or fixing gaspipes.

I would have such fellows banished to remote solitudes, where they should prove their disdain of the grovelling herd by learning to do without them. I would have them fed, clothed, nursed, caressed, and entertained solely by their own sufficiency. Let them enjoy *themselves*.

Erycina's doves, they sing, and ancient stream of Simois!

I sing the common people, and the vulgar London streets—streams of life, action, and passion, whose every drop is a human soul,

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each drop distinct and different, each coloured by his or her own wonderful personality.

I never grow tired of seeing them, admiring them, wondering about them.

Beneath this turban what anxieties? Beneath yon burnoose what heartaches and desires? Under all this sartorial medley of frock-coats, jackets, mantles, capes, cloth, silk, satins, rags, what truth? what meaning? what purport? How to get at the hearts of them? how to evolve the best of them? how to blot out their passions, spites, and rancours, and get at their human kinship and brotherhood?

All day long these streets are crowded with the great, the rich, the gay, and the fair—and if one looks one may also see here the poorest, the most abject, the most pitiful, and most awful of the creatures that God

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permits to live. There is more wealth and splendour than in all the *Arabian Nights*, and more misery than in Dante's *Inferno*.

Such a bustling, jostling, twisting, wriggling wonder! "An intermixed and intertangled, ceaselessly changing jingle, too, of colour; flecks of colour champed, as it were, like bits in the horses' teeth, frothed and strewn about, and a surface always of dark-dressed people winding like the curves on fast flowing water."

There is everything here, and plenty of it. As Malaprop Jenkins wrote to her "O Molly Jones," "All the towns that ever I beheld in my born days are no more than Welsh barrows and crumlecks to this wonderful sitty! Even Bath itself is but a fillitch; in the naam of God, one would think there's no end of the streets, but the Land's End. Then there's such a power of people going

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hurry-scurry ! Such a racket of coxes ! Such a noise and halibaloo ! So many strange sites to be seen ! O gracious ! I have seen the Park, and the Paleass of St. Gimeses, and the Queen's magisterial pursing, and the sweet young princes and the hillyfents, and pybald ass, and all the rest of the Royal Family."

In two minutes from Piccadilly Circus I can be at will in France, in Germany, in Italy, or in Jerusalem. Even at the loneliest hour of the night I can have company to walk with ; for in Bond Street I meet Colonel Newcome's stately figure, in Pall Mall I encounter Peregrine Pickle's new chariot and horses, by the Thames I find the skulking figures of Quilp and Rogue Riderhood, in Southwark I am with Mr. Pickwick and Sam Weller, in Eastcheap with immortal Jack Falstaff, sententious

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Nym, blustering Pistol, and glow-nosed Bardolph.

With such companions at my side,
I float on London's human tide ;
An atom on its billows thrown,
But lonely never, nor alone.

In a hundred yards I may jostle an Archbishop of the Established Church, a Prostitute, a Poet, a victorious General, the Hero of the last football match, a Millionaire, a "wanted" Murderer, a bevy of famous Actresses, a Socialist Refugee from Spain or Italy, a tattooed South Sea Islander, a loose-breeched Man-o'-War's man from Japan, Armenians, Cretans, Greeks, Jews, Turks, and Clarionettes from Pudsey.

The mere picturesque externals suffice to entrance me ; but the spell grips like a vice when I look closer and discriminate between the types.

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Such a commodity of warm slaves has civilisation gathered here ! Such a fascinating rabble of addle-pated toadies, muddy-souled bullies of the bagnio, trade-fallen prize-fighters, aristocratic and other drabs, card and billiard sharpers, discarded unjust serving-men, revolted tapsters, touting tipsters, police-court habitués, cut-purses, area sneaks, and general slum-scum ; pimpled bookmakers, millionaire sweaters and their dissipated sons ; jerry-builders, members of Parliament, phosy-jaw and lead poisoners ; African diamond smugglers, peers on the make, long-nosed company promoters, and old clo' men ; Stock Exchange tricksters, fraudulent patriotic contractors, earthworms and graspers ; fog-brained and parchment-hearted crawlers, pigeons, rooks, hawks, vultures, and carrion crows ; the cankers of a base city and a sordid age ; the flunkies,

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pimps, and panders of society ; the pride and chivalry of Piccadilly ; the carrion, maggots, and reptiles of an empire upon whose infamies the sun never wholly succeeds in hiding its blushing countenance.

There is no fear of my forgetting the misery and crime underlying London's splendour. I never invite Mrs. Dangle's admiration to the flashing lights of Piccadilly but she sharply reminds me of the pitiful sights which they illuminate. The ever-fresh and ever-wonderful magic of the Embankment's circle as seen by night from Adelphi Terrace does not efface the remembrance of Hood's "Bridge of Sighs," nor of Charles Mackay's "Waterloo Bridge."

In she plunged boldly, no matter how coldly the rough river ran :—

Over the brink of it, picture it, think of it,
dissolute Man !

Lave in it, drink of it, then, if you can !

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I have seen our painted sisters standing for hire under the flaring gas-lamps. I have seen ghastly wrecks of humankind slinking by the blazing shop fronts as if ashamed of their hungry faces ; and others, bloated out of womanly grace, tottering from gin-palace doors into side-dens that make one pale and sick to glance into.

And the interminable battalions of foolish-faced men in foolish frock-coats and foolish tall hats, who suck their foolish sticks as they foolishly amble by !

What tragic and comic contrasts ! What variety !

Faces black and copper faces ; yellow faces, rosy faces, and martyrs' faces ghastly white ; cruel crafty faces, false and leering faces—faces cynical, callous, and confident ; faces crushed, abject, bloodless, and woebegone ; satyrs' faces, gross, pampered, impudent, and

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sensual ; sneering, arrogant, devilish faces ; and shrinking faces full of prayer and meek entreaty ; vulture faces — eager, greedy, ravenous ; penguin faces — fat, smug, and foolish ; faces of whipped curs, fawning spaniels, and treacherous hounds ; wolves' faces and foxes' faces, and many hapless heads of puzzled sheep floating helpless down the current ; faces of all tints and forms and characters ; and not a few, thank Heaven ! of faces strong and calm, of faces kind, modest, and intrepid ! of faces blooming, healthy, pretty, and beautiful !

Gold and grime, purple and shame, squalor and splendour, contrasts and wonders without end. And all of it—all the flotsam and jetsam of these tumultuous streets—gallant hearts, heroes, criminals, millionaires, pretty girls, and wrecks—they are all charged, and overbrimming with interest, for, as

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Longfellow says, "these are the great themes of human thought; not green grass, and flowers, and moonshine."

Yet flowers too can London show.

In the densest quarters of Whitechapel I have seen grass and trees as green as the best that can be seen in the choicest districts of Oldham or Bolton.

As for the West End, no richer, riper scenes of urban beauty are to be found in Europe than the stretch of park and garden spread out between the Horse Guards and Kensington Palace.

Stand on the steps of the Albert Memorial and feast your gaze on the woody vistas of Kensington Gardens; or, from the suspension bridge of fair St. James's Park, look over the water to the up-piled, towering white palaces of Whitehall; or, without exertion at all, lie down amongst the sheep in the wide green

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fields of Hyde Park, and listen to the hum of the traffic.

Hyde Park's verdurous carpet is shot in its season with the golden lustre of the buttercup, dotted with the peeping white of the timorous daisy, and spangled with the flaunting, extravagant dandelion. Every tree is in spring a gorgeous picture, and every thorn bush a bouquet of fragrant flower.

As for London's outside suburbs, no English town can show such charming variety of wood and meadow, of hill and plain.

Smiling uplands and blooming slopes ; bushy lanes, flowered hedges, and crystal streams ; cottages overgrown, according to the season, with honeysuckle, roses, and creeping plants of gorgeous varying hues ; smooth green lawns bedecked with flowers ; bracken and woods upon the hills ; scampering rabbits, scattered meditative cattle, placid

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sheep, singing birds, swifts and swallows, rooks high sailing o'er tufted elms; and, above all, the sweet, blue, cloudless, southern sky;—all these may be found on a fine summer's day within an easy cycle-ride in any direction from London.

Where shall we find nobler views than those exposed from Muswell's woody slopes, or Sydenham's stately terraces; from happy Hampstead, or haughty Highgate; from rare Richmond, or, best of all, from glorious Leith?

Where are sweeter woods than those of Epping or Hadley? Where such glades as at Bushey or Windsor? Where so sweet a garden, or so gracious a stream to water it, as lies open to the excursionist in the valley of the Thames between Maidenhead and beautiful Oxford?

To hear the lark's song gushing forth to the

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sun on Hampstead's golden heath, to see the bluebells making soft haze in the Hadley woods, to watch the children returning through Highgate to their feculent rookeries laden with the fair bloom of hawthorn hedges, to lie on Hyde Park's soft green velvet, is to bring home the knowledge to our tarnished hearts that even this city of fretful stir, weariness, and leaden-eyed despair, might be sweet and of goodly flavour—that even London's cruel face might be made to beam upon all her children like a maternal benediction, if they were wise enough to deserve and demand it !

But—

Mammon is their chief and lord,
Monarch slavishly adored ;
Mammon sitting side by side
With Pomp and Luxury and Pride,
Who call his large dominion theirs,
Nor dream a portion is Despair's.

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The wealth and the poverty! the grandeur and the wretchedness!

Sir Howard Vincent, a Conservative M.P., lately told his Sheffield constituents, after a round of visits paid to "almost every state in Europe," that—

He had no hesitation in saying that in a walk of a mile in London, and in the West End too, they saw more miserable people than he met with in all the countries enumerated—more bedraggled, unhappy, unfortunate out-of-works, seeking alms and bread, and strong men earning a few pence loitering along with immoral advertisements on their shoulders. He granted that there were more people in London with palatial mansions, luxurious carriages, and high-stepping horses, but there was much greater poverty and dire distress among the aged.

As regards the luxury, this is true enough. As regards poverty, London's state is bad—God knows!—infinitely worse than that of Paris, which I know intimately; but not so

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bad, according to my more travelled friends, as that of Russian, Italian, or even Saxon industrial regions. London's destitution at its worst is perhaps more brutal, and more repellent, but not more hopeless than the more picturesque poverty of sunnier climes.

Poplar, Stepney, Hoxton, Bethnal Green, and Whitechapel are as hideous tumours upon a fair woman's face.

They are vile labyrinths of styces, where pallid men and women, and skeleton children,—guileless little things, fresh from the hands of God,—wallow like swine.

Yet, except for vastness, London slums are not more shameful than the slums Sir Howard Vincent may find, if he will look in the town which he has the dishonour of representing in Parliament.

I saw the slum-scum sweltering in their

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close-packed, fœtid East End courts during the great water famine last summer (miles of luxuriously appointed palaces in the gorgeous West standing the while deserted), but even then I found them cleaner, fresher, and sweeter than the slums of Manchester, Liverpool, Dublin, Dundee, Glasgow, Birmingham, or Darkest Sheffield.

For over all these London possesses one precious, inestimable advantage — the wide estuary and great air avenue of the 'Thames, through which refreshing winds are borne into the turbid crannies, bringing precious seeds of health and sweeping out the stagnant poisons.

.
I have beheld the great city in many aspects, fair and foul. I have seen St. Paul's pierce with ghostly whiteness through a mist

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that swathed and wholly hid its lower parts, the great dome rising like a phantom balloon from out a phantom city. I have seen a blue-grey "London particular" transform a dingy, narrow street into a portal of mystery, romance, and enchantment. I have loitered on Waterloo Bridge to gaze on the magic of the river and listen to the eerie music of Time's roaring loom. I have heard the babel of Petticoat Lane on Sunday morning. I have surveyed the huge wen and contrasted it with the pleasant Kentish weald from Leith Hill's summit. And I would not go back from London to any place that I have lived in. I like London. I am bitten as I have seen all bitten that came under its spell — bitten as I vowed I never could be.

London's air is in my lungs and nostrils, its glamour in my eyes, its roar

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and moan and music in my ears, its fever in my blood, its quintessence in my heart.

I came to scoff and I pray to remain.

LONDON CHARLIE

Pleasure, or wrong or rightly understood,
Our greatest evil, or our greatest good.

MOORE.

THE celebrated novelist Ouida has made a general indictment against the "*cruel ugliness and dulness*" of the streets of London.

The greatest city in the world, according to Mdlle. de la Ramé, has "a curiously provincial appearance, and in many ways the aspect of a third-rate town."

Even the aristocratic quarters are "absolutely and terribly depressing and tedious";

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and as for *decorative beauty*, this is all she can find of it in London :—

An ugly cucumber frame like Battersea Park Hall, gaudily coloured ; a waggon drawn by poor, suffering horses, and laden with shrieking children, going to Epping Forest ; open-air preachers ranting hideously of hell and the devil ; gin-palaces, music-halls, and the flaring gas-jets on barrows full of rotting fruit, are all that London provides in the way of enjoyment or decoration for its multitudes !

Instead of which, I am free to maintain that no town of my acquaintance has such diversity of entertainment.

Paris has the bulge in the trifling, foolish matter of theatrical plays and players. But London has more and finer playhouses ; as good opportunities of hearing great music ; and infinitely larger and better-appointed music-halls.

London has now the finest libraries,

museums, and picture-galleries ; and as for out-door entertainment, no town possesses such remarkable variety as is offered at the Imperial Institute, the Crystal and Alexandra Palaces, Olympia, and Earl's Court. Thereby hangs a tale.

It must be that the provincial friends who visit me are not as other men. I hear of people receiving guests from the country and taking them out for nice walks to the National Gallery, South Kensington Museum, the Tower, and other places of cultured dissipation provided by the generous ratepayer to discourage and kill off the cheap-tripper ; but I have no such luck.

To my ardent, blushing commendation of national eleemosynary entertainments, the rude provincials who assail my hospitality reply with a rude provincial wink.

Frequent failure has, I fear, stripped my

plausibility of its pristine bloom. Time was when I could boldly recommend Covent Garden Market at four o'clock in the morning as a first-rate attraction to the provincial pilgrim of pleasure, but your stammering tongue and quailing eye are plaguy mockers of your useful villainy.

Mrs. Dangle herself begins to look doubtfully when, on our periodical little pleasure trips, I repeat the customary: "Tower! eh? It will be *such* a treat!"

Ah me! Confidence was a beautiful thing. The world grows too cynical. Earl's Court is the thin end of the wedge by which the hydra-headed serpent of unbelief is bred to fly roughshod over the thin ice of irresolute dissimulation, to nip the mask of pretence in the bud, and with its cold, uncharitable eye to suck the very life-blood of that confidence which is the corner-stone and sheet-

anchor of friendly trust 'twixt man and man.

Be that as it may, my praise of County Council Parks and County Council Bands, of Tower history and Kensington culture, is as ineffectual as a Swedish match in a gale.

My visitors, as with one accord, reply, "That is neither here nor there. We are going to Earl's Court."

Thus, Captandem had come to town, and said "he wanted to see things."

I tempted him with the usual programme.

"I am told," I insinuated, "that the Ethnographical Section of the British Museum 'silently but surely teaches many beautiful lessons.'"

"I daresay," he sneered.

"The educational facilities furnished by South Kensington Museum"—

"Educational fiddlesticks," interrupted he.

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"The Tower," I went on, "is improving to the mind."

"I have had some."

"The National Gallery"—

"Be hanged!" he snorted. "Do you take me for an Archæological Conference? or a British Association picnic?"

"Well," I began, in my most winning Board-meeting manner, "if you don't like my suggestions, you can go to"—

"Earl's Court," he opportunely snapped.

.

He then explained that he had been reading in *The Savoy*, a poem by Sarojini Chattopâdhyây on "Eastern Dancers," commencing thus:—

Eyes ravished with rapture, celestially panting,
what passionate spirits aflaming with fire
Drink deep of the hush of the hyacinth heavens
that glimmer around them in fountains of
light?

London Charlie

O wild and entrancing the strain of keen music
that cleaveth the stars like a wail of desire,
And beautiful dancers with houri-like faces bewitch
the voluptuous watches of night.

The scents of red roses and sandalwood flutter and
die in the maze of their gem-tangled hair,
And smiles are entwining like magical serpents the
poppies of lips that are opiate-sweet,
Their glittering garments of purple are burning like
tremulous dawns in the quivering air,
And exquisite, subtle, and slow are the tinkle and
tread of their rhythmical slumber-soft feet.

Now silent, now singing and swaying and swinging,
like blossoms that bend to the breezes or
showers,

Now wantonly winding, they flash, now they falter,
and lingering languish in radiant choir,
Their jewel-bright arms and warm, wavering, lily-
long fingers enchant thro' the summer-swift
hours,

Eyes ravished with rapture, celestially panting,
their passionate spirits aflaming with fire.

When I had finished reading this too-too
all but morsel of exquisiteness, the Boy said

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he'd be punctured if he could exactly catch the hang of the thing (the Philistine !), but he thought he would like some of those (the heathen !), and having seen an announcement that a troupe of Eastern Dancers were then appearing at Earl's Court, he had determined to let his passionate, with fire-aflaming spirit "drink deep of the hush of the hyacinth heavens."

.
On the way to Earl's Court, I filled up the Boy with such general information about Nautch Girls, as I had gathered in my studies.

I informed him that nothing could exceed the transcendent beauty, both in form and lineament, of these admirable creatures ; that their dancing was the most elegant and gently graceful ever seen, for that it comprised no prodigious springs, no vehement pirouettes,

no painful tension of the muscles, or extravagant contortions of the limbs ; no violent sawing of the arms ; no unnatural curving of the limbs, no bringing of the legs at right angles with the trunk ; no violent hops or jerks, or dizzy jumps.

The Nautch Girl's arms, I assured him, move in unison with her tiny, naked feet, which fall on earth as mute as snow. She occasionally turns quickly round, expanding the loose folds of her thin petticoat, when the heavy silk border with which it is trimmed opens into a circle round her, showing for an instant the beautiful outline of her form, draped with the most becoming and judicious taste.

She wears, I continued, scarlet or purple celestial pants, and veils of beautiful gauze with tassels of silver and gold. The graceful management of the veil by archly peeping

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under it, then radiantly beaming over it, was in itself enough, I assured him, to make one's eyes celestially pant, but—

“Dis way for Indu juggler, Indu tumbler, Nautch Dance,” at this moment cried a shrill voice at my side ; and I perceived that we were actually standing outside the Temple where the passionate spirits in celestial pants drink deep of the hush of the hyacinth heavens !

.

The performance had begun. An able-bodied, well-footed Christy Minstrel was doing a sort of shuffling walk-round, droning out the while a monotonous wail in a voice that might have been more profitably employed to kill cats.

“Lor’,” the Boy complained, “will that suffering nigger last long? Couldn’t they get him to reserve his funeral service for his

own graveyard? Ask them how soon they mean to trot out the exquisite, subtle Tremulous Dawns,—the swaying and swinging Sandalwood Slumber-soft Flutter in celestial pants,—the wantonly winding Linger-ing Languishers?”

I approached one of the artistes—a lean and dejected Fakir, picturesquely attired in a suit of patched atmosphere.

“That’s very nice,” I said conciliatorily, “very nice indeed, in its way. But we don’t much care for Wagner’s music, nor Christy Minstrels. We would prefer to take a walk until your cornerman is through: at what time will the Nautch Girls appear?”

“Yes, yes,” the heathen Hindu replied, with a knowing leer, “Nautch Girl ver’ good, ver’ good; Lonndonn Charlee, he likee Nautch Girl, ver’ good.”

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"Yes," I said. "What time do they kick off?"

"Yes, yes, ver' good, ver' good, Nautch Girl," the mysterious Oriental replied; "she Nautch Girl bimeby done now; me go do conjur, ver' good, ver' good."

"Nautch Girl nearly done?" I cried. "Why, where *is* the Nautch Girl!"

"That Nautch Girl is dance now, ver' good, ver' good. Lonndonn Charlee, he likee Nautch Girl, ver' good."

At last the horrible truth dawned on me!

The person we had taken for a Christy Minstrel was the wantonly winding, lingeringly languishing Nautch Girl!!!

.
After that we visited other "side shows," and saw more dejected Hindoos perform marvellous feats of jugglery and conjuring, with the aid of trained mongooses, monkeys,

and goats. Also an extraordinary game of football by Burmese players, who catch a glass ball on their necks and ankles as dexterously as Ranjitsinhji catches a cricket ball with his hands. Also we saw the acrobats who balance themselves on a bamboo pole by gripping it with their stomachs—a trick which I have since practised with but incomplete success.

We also saw the juggling of an Indian humorist with two attendants, who, if they did not realise all the wonders we have read about Indian conjurers, did at least perform miracles with the English language and the linked sweetness of music too long drawn out.

The attendants sat on the ground and beat monotonous drums, what time the conjurer walked to and fro and played a peculiarly baneful type of Indian bagpipe.

The Haunts of Old Cockaigne

“Ram, ram, ram, ram, kurte heren ugh!” sang the conjurer.

“Ugh! ugh! ugh! ugh!” sang the chorus, rolling their eyes and swaying their shoulders.

“Baen, deina, juldee, chup, chup!” droned the conjurer.

“Chup, chup, chup, chup,” wailed the chorus.

“Hum mugurer hue! hum padre hue! hum booker se mur jata hue!” cried the conjurer.

“Hue! hue! hue! hue!” replied the chorus.

Then, “one, two, three, four, five, nine, sumting, fifteen, twenty,” cried the conjurer, fumbling with his conjuring gear; “see dere, dere de egg; Lonndonn chicken egg, chicken egg, chicken egg.”

“Chicken egg, chicken egg,” repeated the

London Charlie

chorus in triumphant tones ; and banged the mournful drums.

By weird Hindu enchantment, they beguiled Captandem to the platform to assist, and having got him there, proceeded to make him wish he wasn't.

"Lonndonn Charlee," cried the conjurer, triumphantly introducing him ; "Lonndonn Charlee, Lonndonn Charlee, say now uchmeechulouchuadmee," and grinned like a heathen.

"Uchmeechulouchuadmee," wailed the chorus.

"Uchmee—uchmee—oh ! I can't say it," cried poor London Charlie, and the chorus, showing all its flashing teeth, victoriously droned a mocking "Bu-u-uh !" which obviously completed London Charlie's discomfort and distress.

"Lenneeme Lonndonnsixpence, Lonndonn

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Charlee," cried the conjurer; and the youthful Captandem, after much inward searching, produced the coin demanded.

The conjurer took it in his hand, placed it under a flower-pot, and said: "Ulla ulla juldeechupalee"; and the chorus shouted, "Chupalee."

Then followed two or three more experiments and practical jokes on London Charlie's confiding innocence, till at last London Charlie, unwilling to bear any more ridicule, leaped from the platform and desperately fled the scene—looking as unlike the cocksure London Charlie that went up, as doth the tin-kettled feline maniac which has fallen amongst felonious boys, to the smug and purring pet of the ancient spinster's fireside.

Poor little London Charlie.

It was not till long afterwards that he remembered his sixpence.

Poor Captandem !

Still he enjoyed himself, and, if the truth must be told, there are moments when even I am less amused by the mummies and fossils of the museums than by the lights, the fountains, the colour, and the movement of Earl's Court.

I wonder why it never occurs to the philanthropists and municipalities which provide picture-galleries, libraries, and other elevating institutions for the people, to try the effect upon Whitechapel or Ancoats of a genuine place of *amusement*.

The class from which our philanthropists chiefly spring, regard with suspicion nearly everything in which the common people find spontaneous pleasure ; and, instead of helping the development and improvement of such natural sources of delight, they only

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aim to "elevate" the masses by mortifying their flesh and wearying their souls.

To "elevate" them, the philanthropists close their eyes to all that delights the common people, and thrust upon them, willy-nilly, something which interests them not at all, something which they cannot understand, something which nips and chills and infinitely bores them.

The philanthropists, when they give of their benefactions to the people, cannot, or will not, see that to teach a mouse to fly, it is needful for the teacher to begin by stepping down to the earth. They insist, as a condition of their generosity, that the people shall be thereby flabbergasted, petriflummoxed, and aggrawetblankalysed with everlasting doldrums.

Show me, anywhere, 'twixt Widnes and Heaven—which is as wide a stretch as

imagination may compass—any public institution founded by private munificence for the people's delectation, to which the people flock with cheerful alacrity, or wherein the people bear themselves with anything like holiday jauntiness.

The public museums and picture-galleries are very fine institutions, but how much do they affect or brighten the lives of the mass? How do they touch the common people? How many of the Slum-scum come? and how often? Do they enjoy the painted and sculptured masterpieces presented to their admiration? Is it possible that, without guidance or explanation, they can understand the beauty of these, their treasures?

Behold the stragglers that come—how puzzled, awestruck, furtive, and ill-at-ease they are! There is fear of the Superior Person in their face, and of the policeman

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in their tread. They stare at the frames, at the skylights, at the polished floors, at the attendants, and at the modified Minervas in No. 9 *pince-nez* who are the most regular frequenters of such places ; but they scarcely see the pictures. They walk on their toes to prevent noise, cough apologetically, shrivel under the withering glances of the modified Minervas, and look ostentatiously unhappy.

The modified Minervas walk round with the air of exclusive proprietorship. They are at home. They pervade the place. The young ones stare with mild amazement or languid curiosity at the unaccustomed, aberrant hewer of wood or drawer of water, as if speculating as to which of the more remote planets he sprang from ; the elder ones glare at him through their eyeglasses with such scathing disdain as to confirm

him in his opinion that his entrance there was an unpardonable liberty.

The public museums and picture-galleries are made, not for the common people of the seething slums, but for the modified Minervas of the genteel suburbs. These are the legatees of the public philanthropists. That which is given for the "elevation of the masses" tends in practice to elevate nothing except the already tilted tips of their particularly cultured noses. The benevolent Cræsus produces no happiness by his benefaction, except that which these ladies derive from the admiring contemplation of their refined superiority.

What the common people want is the glitter of spectacle, the intoxication of beauty and grace, of music and dance; the sensation of light and brightness and stirring movement.

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The wisest thing to do with appetites so old-established and deep-rooted is, not to suppress, but to guide them.

Obstruct them, and they will run into dark and dirty channels out of sight ; recognise and cultivate them in the clear light of day, and they may produce in every town even better sources of amusement than Earl's Court.

LONDON GHOSTS

I pass the populous houses
In terrace or street or square,
I hear the rattle of chariots
And the sound of life on the air ;
And up at the curtained windows,
Where the flaming gaslights glow,
I see 'mid the flitting shadows
Of the guests that come and go,
The paler and dimmer shadows
Of the ghosts of the Long Ago.
CHARLES MACKAY.

ONCE upon a time, as the charmed books tell, there was a mountain covered with stones, of which each particular flint or pebble had been, "upon a time," a live and sentient man or woman.

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The stones lay, with no attribute of life except a power to appeal in such wise to passers-by as to compel them to remain. But there came, one happy day, a beauteous maiden with a pitcher full of the Water of Life, and she, sprinkling the precious fluid over the stones, transformed them again into animated creatures of flesh and blood—"a great company of youths and maidens who followed her down the mountain."

As I take my walks in London-town, I think of that story and long for a pitcher of the magic Water of Life.

For if imagination may trace the noble dust of Alexander till he find it stopping a bung-hole, and if, as biologists tell us, the whole of our mortal tissue is unceasingly being shed and renewed, every brick and stone in London pavement, church, inn, and dwelling-house must have in it some part of

London Ghosts

human greatness ; for the flower of Britain's brain and valour, the heroes of her most glorious service and achievement—poets, philosophers, prelates, princes, statesmen, soldiers, scientists, explorers—the greatest of those who have “toiled and studied for mankind,” have lived in London.

Milton used to thank God that he had been born in London. Shakespeare acted in Blackfriars and near London Bridge ; his wit flashed nightly at the Mermaid ; in the shadow of Whitehall, he broke his heart for Mary Fitton ; and here he wove the magic of his plays.

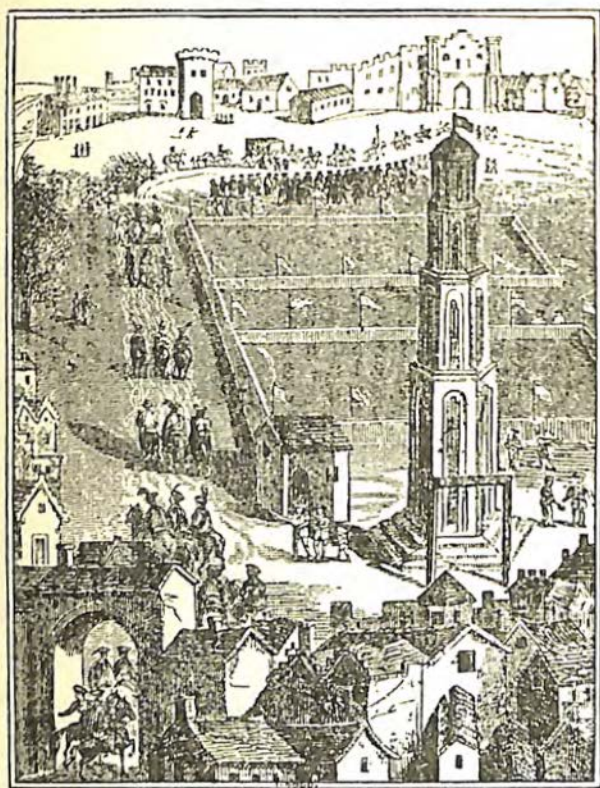
That is the consideration which makes London's enchantment so irresistible. Here is the actual, visible scene of the most momentous deeds of our history, of the most memorable episodes in our country's fiction, and of the workaday, toiling, rejoicing, and sorrowing of

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the greatest of our English brothers and sisters.

At Charing Cross the statue of Charles I. on his Rabelais horse faces the site of the scaffold "in the open street," on to which the king stepped one morning through a window of his palace of Whitehall. Pepys saw General Harrison hanged, drawn, and quartered at Charing Cross, he (Harrison) "looking as cheerful as any man could in that condition." And he gravely adds that Sir Harry Vane, about to be beheaded on Tower Hill, urgently requested the executioner to take off his head so as not to hurt a pimple on his neck.

Trooper Lockyer, a brave young soldier of seven years' service, though only twenty-three years old, having helped to seize General Cromwell's colours at the Bull in Bishopsgate, was shot in Paul's Churchyard by



STRAND CROSS, COVENT GARDEN, &c. Anno 1647.

grim Oliver's orders. His crime was that he was a Leveller or early Socialist, "with hot notions as to human freedom, and the rate at which millenniums are obtainable. He falls shot in Paul's Churchyard on Friday, amid the tears of men and women," says Carlyle, Paul's Cathedral being then a horse-guard, with horses stamping in the canons' stalls, and its leaden roof melted into bullets. On the following Monday the corpse having been "watched and wept over" meantime "in the eastern regions of the City," brave Lockyer was buried "at the new churchyard in Westminster":—

The corpse was adorned with bundles of Rosemary, one half stained with blood . . . Some thousands followed in rank and file: all had sea-green and black ribbon tied on their hats and to their breasts; and the women brought up the rear.

How actual and visible and present they

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are, as one stands on the spots where these great events were transacted ! And such histories has nearly every street and every ancient building. London is not paved with gold. It is paved with the glory of England's mighty dead.

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The name is Legion of the eminences whose last cumbrous clog of clay is buried here.

In Westminster's venerable and beautiful Abbey, where I saw Gladstone buried last June, I can look on the bury-hole of Edward the Confessor, King of our remote Anglo-Saxon ancestors, and one of the prime founders of English liberties ; I see the tomb of that butcher Edward who subdued Wales and overthrew Scotland's Wallace ; here, too, is the grave of the third Edward, who, by his raiding and stealing, laid the foundations of

London Ghosts

England's glorious commerce. Here, under his Agincourt helmet, lies the valiant dust of Falstaff's Prince Hal, and of three other Royal Henrys. Bloody Mary rests from her fiery rage; Mary Queen of Scots is united in death to her terrible foe, Elizabeth of England; and two Stuart Kings repose uncomplainingly by the side of William of Orange.

Here mighty troublers of the earth,
Who swam to sov'reign rule through seas of blood;
The oppressive, sturdy, man-destroying villains,
Who ravag'd kingdoms, and laid empires waste,
And in a cruel wantonness of power
Thinn'd states of half their people, and gave up
To want the rest; now, like a storm that's spent,
Lie hushed.

From these crumbled majesties I turn
with reverence to aisles hallowed by the
mould of Darwin, Dickens, Thackeray,

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Browning, Macaulay, Livingstone, Garrick, and Handel.

Beneath St. Paul's great dome my gratitude can tender homage to the names of 'Titanic' Turner, Reynolds, Landseer, Napier, Cornwallis, Wellington, and Nelson.

Think what a procession if all these could be sprinkled with the Water of Life! If to each fragment of noble dust in this huge, unshapely, and overgrown wilderness of masonry, one could call back the soul that sometime quickened it, what a great city, in Walt Whitman's sense, would London be!

Every town cherishes the sacred memory of its own particular great man, but London bears in its bosom intimate and familiar tokens of them all. The city and its neighbourhood for miles round are marked with historic and literary associations. The

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place is all composed of great men's fame and chapters of world-history. London Clay is made of London's Pride, and London Pride grows in the London Clay.

Not a quarter, not a suburb is free of hallowed associations.

Within half an hour's stroll from my home at Highgate I can visit the pleasaunce of which Andrew Marvell wrote—

I have a garden of my own,
But so with roses overgrown,
And lilies, that you would it guess
To be a little wilderness.

I cross the threshold of the adjoining house, and stand within the actual domicile of staid Andrew's improper neighbour, Mistress Nell Gwynne. It was from a window of this house she threatened to drop her baby, unless her Merry Monarch would there and then confer name and title on him; and

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thus came England into the honour and glory of a ducal race of St. Albans.

When Nell Gwynne looked up from that signally successful jest, she may have seen, across the street, the two houses wherein, a few years before, had dwelt the stern Protector of the Commonwealth and the husband of his daughter, Ireton. I wonder what she thought of old Noll!

The houses stand there yet, substantial, square, their red brick "mellowed but not impaired by time."

The "restored" Charles had had the corpses of over a hundred Puritans, including Admiral Blake's, and that of Cromwell's old mother, dug up from their graves and flung in a heap in St. Margaret's Churchyard; he had hung in chains on Tyburn gallows the disinterred clay of Cromwell, Ireton, and Bradshaw.

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I wonder he was not prompted to pull down these dwellings of his father's "murderers." He must have seen them often. Their windows overlooked the garden of his light-o'-love.

Did *she* intercede to have them preserved? As I linger there, I like to think so.

Still within a half-mile circle of my home, on the same Highgate Hill whereon stand the houses of Nell Gwynne and Ireton, I can show my children the "werry, indential" milestone from which—*ita legenda scripta*—Dick Whittington was recalled by the sound of Bow Bells.

At the top of Highgate Hill, and on the slope of another hill where a man (since dead in the workhouse) saved Queen Victoria's life, stands the house where Samuel Taylor Coleridge lived. Here, and,

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it is said, in a little inn near by, he entertained such company as Shelley, Keats, Byron, Leigh Hunt, and—surely not in the little inn?—Carlyle.

Coleridge lies buried in the churchyard hard by, and in Highgate Cemetery I find the graves of George Eliot, Michael Faraday, Charles Dickens' daughter Dora, Tom Sayers the prize-fighter, and Lillywhite the cricketer.

Harry Lowerison has a way of teaching children by taking them to see the streets and monuments of London ; and I can think of no more interesting or promising mode of instruction.

For in these scenes English history is indelibly and picturesquely written, back to the date of our earliest records.

I stood one day in Cannon Street, when a passing omnibus-horse chanced to slip. The

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vehicle swerved across the asphalt, and, to complete the catastrophe, the horse fell.

Then, hey, presto! in the twinkling of an eye, the street was blocked with a compact mass of "blue carts and yellow omnibuses, varnished carriages and brown vans, green omnibuses and brown cabs, pale loads of yellow straw, rusty red iron clanking on paintless carts, high white wool packs, grey horses, bay horses, black teams; sunlight sparkling on the brass harness, gleaming from the carriage panels; jingle, jingle, jingle."

A bustling, shuffling, pushing, wriggling, twisting wonder! One moment's damming of the stream had caused such a gathering as Imperial Cæsar never dreamt of.

I was pushed back against the wall, and then observed that I stood by the London Stone—a stone which "'midst the tangling

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horrors of the wood" by Thames side, may have been drenched with the human gore of druidical sacrifices. Captives bound in wicker rods may have burned upon its venerable surface to glut the fury of savage gods.

That stone stood here when Constantine built the London Wall around the "citty."

It was here when, upon an island formed by a river which crept sullenly through "a fearful and terrible plain," which none might approach after nightfall without grievous danger, King Sebert of the East Saxons built to the glory of St. Peter the Apostle that church which is known to our generation as Westminster Abbey.

The London Stone stood when Sebert built a church on the ruins of Diana's Temple, where now stands St. Paul's Cathedral. London was built before Rome, before

the fall of the Assyrian monarchs, over a thousand years before the birth of Jesus Christ.

Who knows? Where I stood, old Chaucer may have stood to see his Canterbury Pilgrims pass. Falstaff, reeling home from Dame Quickly's Tavern with his load of sherris-sack, may have sat here to ponder on his honour. Shakespeare may have leaned on the old milestone as he watched the Virgin Queen's pageant to Tilbury Fort in Armada times. Through James Ball's and Jack Cade's uprising, through the Wars of the Roses, the Fire of London, the Plague, the Stuart upheaval, and Cromwell's stirring times—through all these the London Stone stood, "fixed in the ground very deep," says Stowe, "that if carts do runne against it through negligence the wheels be broken, and the stone itself unshaken." And now

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it links the bustle and roar of modern London with the strife out of which London grew, and keeps our conceits reminded of the forefathers who lived and fought in Britain here to make the way more smooth for us.

Ere cabs or omnibuses were; ere telephones, telegraphs, or railways; ere Magna Charta; before William the Conqueror brought our ancient nobility's ancestors over from Normandy—London knew this stone.

It has endured longer than any king, it has survived generations and dynasties of monarchs. "Walls have ears," they say, and Shakespeare "finds tongues in trees, books in running brooks, and sermons in stones."

What a tale would he tell that could find the tongue of the London Stone!

Think of all the men and women who

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have passed it, seen it with their eyes, felt it with their hands ; the millions of simple, faithful, anonymous people who have cheerfully slaved, and bled, and died, to help—as each according to his lights conceived—the honour, safety, and well-being of his country.

We have paid homage to the celebrated dead : what about those that have done their duty and have received neither fame nor monument ? Their blood, too, cries out to me from the paving-stones of London.

Alas for men ! that they should be so blind,
And laud as gods the scourges of their kind !
Call each man glorious who has led a host,
And him most glorious who has murdered most !
Alas ! that men should lavish upon these
The most obsequious homage of their knees—
That those who labour in the arts of peace,
Making the nations prosper and increase,
Should fill a nameless and unhonoured grave,
Their worth forgotten by the crowd they save—

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But that the Leaders who despoil the earth,
Fill it with tears, and quench its children's mirth,
Should with their statues block the public way,
And stand adored as demi-gods for aye.

But thanks to the efforts of Mr. G. F. Watts, R.A., and Mr. Walter Crane, London is at last in a fair way to pay homage also to these unsung and unhonoured heroes of lowly life.

During the Jubilee of 1887 Mr. Watts urged that cloisters or galleries should be erected throughout the country and frescoes painted therein, to record the shining deeds of the Democracy's great men and great women. Such a Campo Santo is now being prepared in the new Postmen's Park in Aldersgate Street, and one of the first frescoes to be painted there by Mr. Crane will commemorate the valiant act of one Alice Ayres, a young nurse-girl who rescued her three

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young charges from a burning house, she herself perishing in the flames.

When I go to Paris, my favourite pilgrimage is to the Mur des Fédérés in the Père-la-Chaise Cemetery, where the last of the Communists were mowed down by the mitrailleuse.

My sincerest worship of the dead in London will be tendered in the Campo Santo of the Postmen's Park, and I hope one day to pay my homage there to the memorial of Trooper Lockyer.

THE MERMAID TAVERN

There hath been great sale and utterance of wine,
Besides beere, and ale, and ipocras fine,
In every country, region, and nation,
But chiefly in Billingsgate, at the Salutation;
And the Bore's Head, near London Stone,
The Swan at Dowgate, a taverne well known;
The Mitre in Cheape; and then the Bull Head,
And many like places that make noses red;
Th' Bore's Head in Old Fish Street, Three
Crowns in the Vintry,
And now, of late, St. Martin's in the Sentree;
The Windmill in Lothbury; The Ship at th'
Exchange,
King's Head in New Fish Street, where oysters do
range;
The Mermaid in Cornhill, Red Lion in the Strand,
Three Tuns, Newgate Market; Old Fish Street, at
the Swan.

(*Newes From Bartholomew Fayre*; an undated,
anonymous black-letter poem.)

The Mermaid Tavern

"MUCH time," says Andrews in his history of the sixteenth century, "was spent by the citizens of London at their numerous taverns."

The tavern was the lounging-place, not only of the idle and dissolute, but of the industrious also. It was the Club, the Forum, sometimes too the Theatre.

The wives and daughters of tradesmen collected here to gossip, and, strange as it now seems to us they came here, too, to picnic. An old song of the period describes a feast of this sort, and tells how each woman carried with her some goose, or pork, the wing of a capon, or a pigeon pie. Arrived at the tavern, they ordered the best wine. They praised the liquor, and, under its inspiring influence, discussed their husbands, with whom they were naturally dissatisfied; and then went home by different streets,

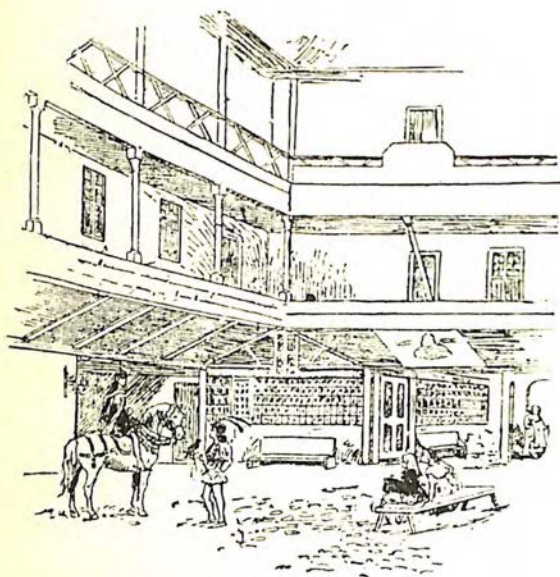
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perfidiously assuring their lawful masters that they had been to church.

This evidence is useful and seemly to be here set down, as indicating the true origin of habits for which much undeserved censure has been in these later days inflicted upon mere imitators.

The men, whose chiefest fault has ever been their too great readiness to follow the women, fell insensibly into the habit, and have been there ever since.

And what a glorious time they have had of it ! To recall only Fuller's description of the "wit combates" between Shakespeare's "quickness of wit and invention" against Ben Jonson's "far higher learning," and "solid, but slow performances," at the historic Mermaid ; and Beaumont's rapturous praise in his epistle to Jonson of the banquet of wit and admirable



COURTYARD OF AN OLD TAVERN.

The Mermaid Tavern

conversation which they had enjoyed at the same place !

Oh to have been at the Mermaid on the night when Jonson had been burnt out at the Bankside Globe ! or on the night of Shakespeare's first performance before Elizabeth—when he had first, perhaps, set eyes on Mary Fitton !

All the wits of that age of giants were wont to assemble, after the theatre, at the Mermaid, the Devil, and the Boar. Exuberant Fletcher and graver Beaumont would “wentle” in from their lodging on Bankside, wearing each other's clothes, and wrangling perhaps about their plots—a habit which on one occasion caused them to be arrested, a fussy listener having heard them disputing in a tavern as to whether they should or should not assassinate the king. Poor, drunken, profligate Greene, and his

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debauched companions, Marlowe and George Peele,—all of whom ended their riotous courses with painful and shameful deaths,—are sure to have lurched in on many a razzling night. Regular visitors, too, were “Crispinus” Dekker, and his friend Wilson the actor, whom Beaumont mentions as a boon-companion over the Mermaid wine:—

Filled with such moisture, in most grievous qualms
Did Robert Wilson write his singing psalms.

From Whitehall, with “their port so proud,
their buskin, and their plume,” would swagger in Raleigh, Surrey, Spenser, and others of the wits from Elizabeth’s ruffling Court. Drummond of Hawthornden came here at least once on a visit to Ben Jonson; but this must have been after Shakespeare had deserted the festive board for the crested pomp of a gentlemanly life at Stratford,

The Mermaid Tavern

“coming up every term to take tobacco and see new motions.”

Sombre John Webster would be here sometimes, sometimes Massinger, Thomas Middleton, Lilly, Thomas Heywood, William Rowley, Day, Wilkins, Ford, Camden, Ned Drayton, Fulke Greville, Harrington, Edmund Waller, Martin, Morley, Selden, the future Bishop of Winchester, *et cetera, et cetera, et cetera* !

What a galaxy ! what a feast !

It is well for your peace of mind, my good wife, that the Mermaid and its company have vanished into the dark immensity. How long would I wait, and cheerfully, for so much as a peep through the window at that glorious company !

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Dryden claims that the Mermaid did not receive such pleasant and such witty fellows

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in the reigns of Bess and James as did the Royal Oak, the Mitre, and the Roebuck after the Restoration ; but to me the haunts of Wycherley, Otway, Villiers of Buckingham, Wilmot of Rochester, and the periwigged bucks and bloods and maccaronies in velvets and lace of Charles the Second's dissolute Court, are, as compared with the Falstaffian Taverns of the Shakespeareans, but dull and dry dens.

So, if you will, of your grace, excuse the pun and the hasty skip, we will give these pretty gentlemen a miss, and jump at once into a fresh chapter and an account of a curious experience that once upon a time came in a tavern to me.

WAS SHAKESPEARE A SCOTSMAN ?

O Caledonia ! stern and wild,
Meet nurse for a poetic child.

SCOTT.

At last I was alone. The landlord, douce man, could stand no more ; his conversation had been large and ample up to midnight, and had indeed left a fair remainder to spread a feast for solitude ; but for the last two hours he had done nothing but alternately yawn and doze.

Now, thank goodness, he had gone, and I could read in peace.

Angels and ministers of grace defend us—

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Bacon's *Essays* and Donnelly's *Cryptogram*! — in the parlour of a shabby old inn! Was mine host, then, of a literary turn? Ay, I had noted his gushing praise of Burns and Walter Scott; and, by the way, what was it he said about Shakespeare's visit to Edinburgh? He had shown me a letter in a book: I had been too intensely bored by his trowelled praise of Scottish lochs, Scottish mountains, haggis, parritch, usquebaugh, and Scottish poetry, to pay much heed — but yes, this must be it. Drummond's *Sonnets*, and here evidently was the letter, signed by Ben Jonson, indorsed "to my very good friend, the lairde of Hawthornden":—

Master vill,

quhen we were drinking at my Lordis
on Sondag, you promised yat you would gett for me
my Lordis coppie he lent you of my Lord Sempill his

Was Shakespeare a Scotsman?

interlude callit philotas, and quhuich vill Shakespeare
told me he actit in edinburt, quhen he wes yair wit
the players, to his gret contentment and delighte.
My man waits your answer :

So give him the play,
And lette him away
To your assured friend
and loving servand,

Ben Jonson.

From my lodging in the canongait,
Mrch the twelft, 1619.

So here also had Shakespeare anticipated
me? Had he been to Edinburgh too?

I might have known: but lo! I grow so
used to our resemblances, I almost cease to
notice them.

Donnelly too! I had never seen his book
before—though I have taken keen interest
in the subject ever since Delia Bacon arose
in—well, the land where they do raise Bacon
—and found Shakespeare out.

Could it indeed be true that Shakespeare

The Haunts of Old Cockaigne

was an ignorant impostor, whose business it was to hold respectable gentlemen's horses at the stage-door of the theatre, instead of which he wickedly suborned the Lord High Chancellor of England to write his plays for him, and the same with intent to deceive?

To make sure, I read a few pages of Donnelly.

Even that failed to convince me: the more I read, the more I didn't know.

I saw Shakespeare's *Works* on the book-shelf, and reached the volume down. It opened at the *Sonnets*.

Ah! what exquisite music! But—what was this?

Your name, from hence, immortal life shall have,
Though *I*, once gone, to all the world must die.

Again in Sonnet xxxviii.—

If my slight muse do please these curious days,
The pain be *mine*, but *thine* shall be the praise.

Was Shakespeare a Scotsman?

And in the next :—

What can mine own praise to mine own self bring?
And what is't but mine own when I praise *thee*?

Curious, surely. What could these lines mean?

And again :—

My life hath in this line some interest.

What if the true cryptogram were concealed in this strangely emphasised and deeply noted line? What if it were left to me to solve the mystery?

By Jove! here *was* a discovery! Writing “interest” “interrest,” as it would be written in the manuscript, the letters in the line spell the words

“MISTRESS MARY FITTON”;

and Mistress Mary Fitton, as everybody

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knows, is the Dark Lady of the *Sonnets*, the lady who had "her Will, and Will to boot, and Will in overplus"; to wit, Will Shakespeare; her young lover, William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke; and the respectable elderly lover whom she was plighted to marry at his wife's death — Sir William Knollys, Comptroller of the Household to Queen Elizabeth!

Mary Fitton's identity with the lady of the *Sonnets* has been established beyond question by Lady Newdegate's publication of *Passages in the Lives of Anne and Mary Fitton*. The perfect anagram which I had accidentally discovered in the most pointedly accentuated line in the whole of the *Sonnets*, was therefore something more than curious.

I next took the entire passage:—

But be contented: when that fell arrest
Without all bail shall carry me away,

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*My life hath in this line some interest,
Which for memorial still with me shall stay.*

After an hour's wrestling I had extracted from the letters forming these four lines, these words :—

“Learn ye that have a little wit y^t FRANCIS BACON THESE LINES TO MISTRESS MARY FITTON, ELIZABETH'S MAID OF HONOUR at Whitehalle, hath writt.”

But the anagram was imperfect. Several letters included in the words of the sonnet, remained unused in my anagram.

It was maddening to arrive so near success, to touch it as it were with one's finger tips, yet fail for a few foolish trifling alphabetic signs

Desperately, frantically, I struggled to complete and perfect the anagram ; but the more I juggled with the letters, the more bewildered, mazed, and helpless I became.

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My blood was a-fire, my head a 'horrible ache, my brain a whirling tornado of dancing vowels and consonants.

The excitement, if still fed and unsatisfied, must lead, I felt, to brain fever or madness.

I tore myself from the intoxicating pursuit, and fell, restless, sleepless, yet painfully weary, upon the couch beneath the window.

It was a wild winter's night, and the view outside was full of "fowle horror and eke hellish dreriment." The cordon of turrets girding the city bulged eerily through the heavy gloom like limbs of a skeleton starkly protruding through a lampblack shroud. A beam of lurid moonlight uncannily lit up a distant stretch of bluff, stern crags, and nearer spectral foreground of towers, gables, and bartisans.

Deep down in the hollow, dismal and desolate, under a sky of raven's feathers,

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glowered murder-stained Holyrood, congenial to the night. The solitary glimmer on the thunder and battle-scarred Castle Rock, looked like a match held up to show the darkness.

The melancholy patter of the rain, and the discordant creaking and rattling of an iron shutter and rusty hinge, made music harmonious to the scene.

The air of the musty room added to the contagious heaviness. In vain I stretched the astral sceptre of the soul upon the incorporeal pavement of conjecture. Nothing came of it, except that I slipped off the couch. I was too restless to think. Even the dog, on the rug at my feet, uneasily twitched and growled in his sleep.

Suddenly, I became conscious of a creepy chill; my head, by some impulse foreign to my volition, was raised from its meditative

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pose ; and in the spluttering, dying beam of the lamp's light, I beheld an Apparition.

A grim and grisly goblin, of unwholesome oatcake hue, fluttered (no other word describes the wild and fitful unreliability of his movements) before my startled gaze ; his eyes, like glassy beads, shone horridly.

My dog raised his head, and looked over his shoulder. When his gaze fell on the Apparition he bounded to his feet, his limbs shaking like jelly, his eyes projecting like shining stars, and his hair standing up round his neck like a frill.

He tried to growl, but the sound, shaken and softened by terror, issued to the night in lamb-like bleats. Yet more appalled by his vocal failure, he shrank, still feebly bleating, backwards under the sofa.

For my part, I believe I may say I was not afraid, but intensely excited. I felt that some-

thing was about to be revealed to me ; this was the reason why my hand trembled so as to knock Shakespeare, Bacon, and Donnelly in one commingled heap of fallen glory to the floor.

I was curious, fascinated, and highly wrought.

The wild and fitful little shape bewilderingly wriggled and flickered in the light, and his ghast and fixed eye was painful to endure. Yet I felt that we two had not met without reason. Instinct told me we should do business.

He was the jerkiest and perkiest little figure I had ever clapped eyes on. He bore his head with confident, nay impudent, erectness ; his arms waved like a windmill's ; and his shapeless little legs straddled all over the place in a succession of purposeless leaps and flings and prancings.

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So quick and fidgety were his movements that it was not easy to catch the details of his dress ; but I saw that his tartan was a spider's web, to whose check the slimy snail had imparted a variety of hue unknown to Macgregor or Macpherson ; his bonnet was a flowering thistle ; his philabeg was made of the beards of oat-florets ; his buckle was a salmon's scale ; and a blade of finest rye dangled proudly by his side.

“ Ye'll know me the noo if ye'll speir lang enoo,” he squealed ironically when I had stared for some moments. “ Gape and glower till your lugs crack, but ye canna' alter the fact that a' great men are Scots. Burrns was Scottish, and Allan Ramsay, and Blair, and Thomson, Smollett, and Hume, and Boswell, and Adam Smith, and Stewart, and Hogg, and Campbell ; and ay, Sir Walter Scott, Tarn Carlyle, and Lord Brougham ; and

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Chalmers, and Brewster, and Lyell, and Livingstone, and Macbeth, and McGinnis; Macchiaveli, the Maccabees: and Macaronis, the Macintoshes and Macrobes; and what reason hae ye to suppose that the author of Shakespeare's *Plays* was an exception?"

"Oh, I don't know," I said, "but—er—have I had the pleasure of meeting you before?"

"Bah!" said he, hastily dancing a strathspey, "ma fute is on ma native dew, ma name is Roderick; I am," he continued, drawing himself up to the full height of his figure, which was about six inches, "I am the Speerit o' Scottish Literature."

"Oh, I know you now," I said, "you're the spirit men call the Small Scotch."

"Where will ye find the Small Scotch that's fu' sax inches in height?" answered Roderick, with asperity.

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"Oh, I beg your pardon," I said. "But I didn't ring for you, did I?"

"I'm no slave o' the ring," proudly answered Roderick, as he broke into the opening steps of a complicated sword-dance. "I came of my ain sweet will, just to improve your mind."

"That's very kind," said I; "will you take a chair, or a tumbler?"

The Spirit hissed angrily, as if a small soda had been poured over him, and I prudently abstained from further interruptions.

As some of my readers are perhaps less fluently acquainted with the Scotch than myself, I take the liberty of translating into English the conversation which ensued.

The Spirit began by asking whether I regarded Shakespeare as the greatest poet that ever lived, or as the meanest sweater that ever exploited the gifts of the help-

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less poor — meaning in this case Francis Bacon.

I responded that I did *not* think Bacon a man of that sort.

“Well,” continued the Spirit, “do you think that a man who could scarcely write his own name could write *Hamlet*?”

“It is a nice point,” I said.

“Very well,” said the Spirit, dancing a series of fantastic Highland flings in the unsubstantial air, and turning a double somersault at the finish; “if, as everybody admits, Bacon was one of the blackest scoundrels that ever lived, his mind could not have conceived the noble philosophy to which his name is attached. And if Shakespeare, as the signature to his will shows, could scarcely write his own name, he could not have written his own *Plays*.”

“Same again,” said I.

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"Besides which," continued the Spirit, "neither Shakespeare nor Bacon was a Scotsman."

"That settles 'em," quoth I.

"Now, look at here," continued the Spirit, aggressively shaking his forefinger under my nose; "whoever wrote Shakespeare's *Plays* must have written Shakespeare's *Sonnets*."

"Undoubtedly," said I.

"And the *Sonnets* were dedicated by the publisher to 'W. H.,' who is styled 'the onlie begetter of these ensuing *Sonnets*.'"

"Well?"

"The publisher must have known who the author was."

"Very likely."

"And in referring to the '*onlie* begetter,' he clearly implies that the authorship was claimed by many, and in furnishing no more than the initials of 'the onlie begetter,' he

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indicates that the real author had reasons for concealing the authorship."

"That may be so."

"Well, why should a man desire to conceal his authorship of such exquisite sonnets—sonnets of whose surpassing excellence he himself is so convinced that he writes—

So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,
So long lives this,

—unless the *Sonnets* contained matter likely to bring him into trouble? For instance, if a man had, in the fervour of his youth, poured out such warm expression of his love as the *Sonnets* contain, and very earnestly desired, later on in life, to marry another lady, he might be anxious then that the authorship of the *Sonnets* should be temporarily forgotten. But Bacon never did marry. And Shakespeare married young, and deserted his wife; and she survived his

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death. Therefore, no such motive for secrecy could have affected Bacon or Shakespeare."

At this point of his inductive reasoning, the Spirit paused for effect: he looked for all the world like a picture I had seen in the *Strand Magazine*.

"Ah!" I said, "I know you now; you are Sherlock Holmes, the defective."

At which he was so indignant that he angrily pirouetted himself right out of sight. But he re-appeared almost immediately, and went on as if nothing had happened:—

"Having proved to you that neither Bacon nor Shakespeare wrote his own works, I will now proceed to tell you who wrote them."

"What! The lot?"

"Certainly. The similarity of thought in Bacon's *Essays* and Shakespeare's *Plays*

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prove that they were written by the same man. That man, as you may see by the legal knowledge betrayed alike in the *Plays* and the *Essays*, must have studied the law. But if he wrote all the books which I attributed to him, he could not have had time to practise it. Moreover, in the atmosphere of the law courts a man could have preserved neither the exquisite sweetness nor the human grandeur of the so-called Shakespeare's *Plays*."

"There's something in that," said I.

"Very well," continued Roderick, curvetting so swiftly that even as one foot touched the floor the other seemed to be kicking the ceiling, "we have now established these facts:—

"First, that the initials of the author of the so-called Shakespeare's *Plays* are 'W. H.'

"Secondly, that he had an intensely painful

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love affair in his youth, and married another woman in his later years.

“Thirdly, that he was a lawyer by education but not by practice.

“Now, who was he? We have yet more evidence to aid us in identifying him. There’s Spenser’s plaint that ‘our pleasant Willy,’ ‘the man whom Nature’s self had made to mock herself and truth to imitate,’ had been ‘dead of late,’ and ‘with him all joy and merriment.’ We have also the lines in the *Sonnets* :—

Make but my name thy love and love that still;
And then thou lov’st me, for my name is Will.

‘The first name of ‘W. H.,’ therefore, is Will. And this Will had great trouble at one period of his life, which silenced all his joy and merriment. Again I ask you, Who was the man?’”

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And the Spirit, bubbling and shaking with eagerness, peered anxiously into my face.

“What great Scotsman of that great period,” he continued, screaming rather than speaking, “was brought up to the law and abandoned it for the pursuit of literature and poetry? was driven nearly to distraction by the loss of a mistress whom he loved more dearly than life? went abroad to seek solace, and, returning after many years, married another lady? wrote and left extant in his own name, sonnets which are acknowledged to be perfect models of sweetness and delicacy, sonnets which have never been eclipsed since his death? who was the Scottish poet, friend of the London actors; friend of Ben Jonson; the man who has left on record in British literature the report of his conversations with Jonson; the man

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who, as you have to-night seen by your landlord's letter, knew Shakespeare and lent him plays which are not known now by the names they then bore—come, come, man, who is this W. H.? Cannot you guess it even now?"

"William of Hawthornden?"

"Of course, of course," the Spirit cried. "Look you, now, how plain it is. William Drummond of Hawthornden was tinged with the conceits and romances of the Italian school, as was the author of *Romeo and Juliet*. He wrote histories, as did the author of *The History of Henry VII.*, attributed to Bacon; as did the author of the historical plays, attributed to Shakespeare. He wrote many reflections on Death, as did the author of the *Sonnets* and the *Plays*. And who but a Scotsman, I would like you to tell me, could have furnished the local

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colour and the Scottish character to the tragedy of *Macbeth*?"

"Why, man, it's as plain as a pikestaff. The greatest Englishman that ever lived was naturally a Scotsman. The greatest genius of any clime or time was William Drummond of Hawthornden."

And, in the frenzy of his exultation, Roderick leaped high again into the air, turned seventeen somersaults in succession, and, alighting upon my nose, danced a wild Highland fling of triumph and defiance.

It was certainly very plausible—as plausible, at least, as any argument that I had heard in support of the theory that Bacon wrote Shakespeare's *Plays*. I was almost persuaded: then a difficulty occurred to me.

"But," I said, "Drummond of Hawthornden was not born till 1585, and some

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of Shakespeare's *Plays* appear to have been produced before 1593."

"Well," answered the Spirit, carelessly sticking his sword into my nose and sitting on it, "what has age to do with genius? Has not another poet said, 'He was not of an age, but for all time'? Besides, the Scottish are a precocious people and by-ordinar'. And furthermore, who told you that Drummond was born in '85?"

"English history says so."

"English history!" answered the Spirit, with a sneer; "try Scotch."

"But," I still objected, "if Shakespeare wrote nothing, why did Ben Jonson, who knew him well, praise his wit and his 'gentle expressions, wherein he flowed with that facility that sometimes it was necessary he should be stopped'?"

"Well," said Roderick, "and who said

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that Shakespeare wrote nothing? I only said he did not write Shakespeare's *Works*. But he wrote other poetry—poetry which everybody knows—poetry as familiar in every child's mouth as butterscotch. There is nothing finer of its kind."

"It is strange," I muttered, "that I have never heard of it."

"What?" cried the Spirit, "never heard of 'Little Jack Horner'?"

Little Jack Horner sat in a corner

Eating a Christmas pie;

He pulled out a plum with his finger and thumb,

And said "What a good boy am I!"

"And is that Shakespeare's?" I exclaimed.

"And what for no'? It is a perfect specimen of pure Anglo-Saxon English, without corrupt admixture of Norman or Roman words. It is terse and dramatic.

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The very first line, in its revelation of the hero's remote and solitary state, presents a powerful suggestion of a contemplative character. His voracity, tempered by intense conscientiousness, is indicated in a few clear, pertinent touches that unmistakably betoken the master-hand. Yet the author's name is lost in the dust of the centuries ; it has eluded the vigilance of antiquarian research. Only I am acquainted with the secret. If you doubt it, turn the poem into an anagram, and the truth shall be clear even to you."

"But," I began, "if"—

"Bah! Look at here!" cried Roderick, jumping to his feet and brandishing his sword, "I came here to improve your mind; but if you are not amenable to reason, it's no use talking. So get out of it, ye puir, daft, gawkie Southron loon!"

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And so saying, he struck me so terrible a blow across the nose with his sword that I sneezed, and lo, behold ! he was gone, and in the place where he had been, was nothing but a great, busy, buzzing moth, that hovered round my nose as though it had been a joy-beacon.

.

It was a strange experience. I don't know what to make of it. But I don't think that Shakespeare was Bacon. And, as I hadn't the slightest trace of headache when I awoke, I think that, after all, the Scottish Spirit was right. Bacon hasn't a ham to stand on. Bacon is smoked. To honest nostrils Bacon hereafter is rancid.

Be that as it may, there can be no doubt henceforth as to the authorship of "Little Jack Horner." Following Roderick's

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instructions, I have taken the letters of the lines of that poem, and have constructed with them an anagram which establishes beyond possibility of dispute that Shakespeare wrote them.

I am prepared to prove it to the British Association, and defy *The Daily Chronicle*. It is true the spelling is rather bad, but Shakespeare's was notoriously beastly, so that is another proof in my favour.

It is moreover a perfect anagram, in which each letter is used, and used once only. The letters are Little jack horner sat in a corner eating a christmas pie he pulled out a plum with his finger and thumb and said what a good boy am i.

Now, mark, hey presto! there's no deception; mix these letters and form them into new combinations, and you evolve this

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remarkable, startling, conclusive, and scientifically historical revelation :—

*Mistir Shakesper aloan was the Lyturer
gent wich rote this Bootiful Pome in
Elizabuth Raign, and Jaimce had
Damn Good Lauph.*

Could anything be clearer?

FLEET STREET

When I go up that quiet cloistered court, running up like a little secure haven from the stormy ocean of Fleet Street, and see the doctor's gnarled bust on the bracket above his old hat, I sometimes think the very wainscot must still be impregnated with the fumes of his seething punch-bowl.

WASHINGTON IRVING.

My Bosom's Lord declares that it is more of a smell than a street; but there is not a journalist of any literary pretension in Britain who does not regard Fleet Street as the Mecca of his craft, and instinctively turn his face towards it when he has occasion to say his prayers.

It is the focus, the magnetic centre, and

Fleet Street

very heart of London's Fairyland — the Capital of the Territory of Brick and Mortar Romance.

Its enchanted courts are the inner sanctuary of Haunted London. It is the most astonishing sensation to step out of the hum and moan and fret of the rushing and turbulent City's most bustling and roaring street, into the absolute, cloistered stillness of, for instance, the Temple; where, within fifty yards of Fleet Street, you may stand by Oliver Goldsmith's grave and hear no sound save the cooing of pigeons and the splashing of a fountain.

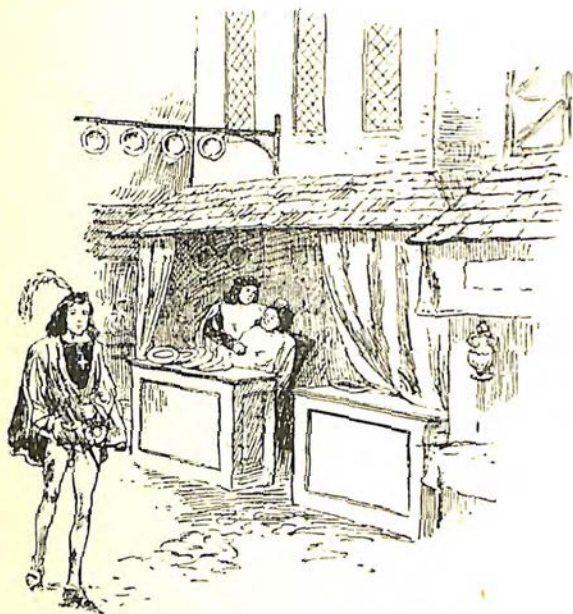
Fleet Street's air is the quintessence of English History. From the Plague and the Fire to the Jubilee Procession, everything has passed here. All the literary eminence of the day comes to do business here.

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These paving-stones have felt the weight of George R. Sims, Clement Scott, Bernard Shaw, and the Poet Craig. It is the world's main artery, the centre of the Empire's nervous system, the brain and soul of England.

Be that as it may, I am conscious of an increase in my stature since I became a part of Fleet Street—a stretching of my boots since I began to walk in the footsteps of Swift, Steele, Pope, Goldsmith, Johnson, and all the other giants whose seething punch-bowls have impregnated the wainscot of the neighbouring taverns.

The chief of the ghosts, of course, is the burly lexicographer—the man with the inky ruffles, the dirty large hands, the shabby brown coat, and shrivelled wig. Methinks I see him now, clinging to his door in dingy Bolt Court, and waking the midnight echoes



A BARBER'S SHOP IN 1492.

Fleet Street

with his Cyclopean laughter, as he listens to a parting from fluent Burke or snuffy Gibbon.

There were no footpaths in Fleet Street in those days; spouts projected the rain-water in streams from the house-tops, and there were no umbrellas. The swinging of broad signs in high winds would sometimes bring down a wall—an accident which killed, on one occasion, in Fleet Street, “two young ladies, a cobbler, and the king’s jeweller.”

And yet the daintiest and prettiest of women came tripping down Fleet Street, and up the narrow court, to see the blustering, pompous Lichfield bear; unless, indeed, Miss Burney, witty Mrs. Montague, charming Miss Reynolds, and shrewd Miss Piozzi only called to caress Hodge, the doctor’s cat.

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(Happy thought! who knows? MEM.:
We must get a cat.)

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It was Dr. Johnson who set the excellent Fleet Street fashion of tempering the fierce delights of literary achievement with staid and lingering meditation in the pleasant taverns.

In fact, the Fleet Street taverns are visited by reverend pilgrims to this day as monuments consecrate to the great lexicographer; and at all times of the day one may find faithful congregations of Fleet Street men of letters devoutly lingering there to pour out libations to his glory.

It was at the Cheshire Cheese, whilst the chops hissed on the grid, that Dr. Johnson was wont to snub Boswell, quiz Goldsmith, and brutally beat down his

opponents with his "Why, sir," "What, sir?" and "What then, sir?"

"Here, sir," he himself admitted, "I dogmatise and am contradicted, and I love this conflict of intellect and opinion." It was in another tavern, up another narrow court, that the pompous author of *Rasselas* said to his delighted biographer, "Sir, give me your hand; I have taken a liking to you." And it was under the influence of this place that Boswell wrote:—

The orthodox High Church sound of the Mitre, the figure and manner of the celebrated Dr. Johnson, the extraordinary power and precision of his conversation, and the pride arising from finding myself admitted as his companion, produced a variety of sensations and a pleasing elevation of mind beyond what I had ever before experienced.

Dear, garrulous, faithful old Bozzy! I have myself seen literary men mentally

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elevated in the same hallowed atmosphere, but never have I met any who expressed his emotions with nicer precision.

But the first and foremost to me of all Fleet Street's illustrious ghosts—as actual and inevitable a feature of the famous thoroughfare as the taverns, the restaurants, the overhanging signs, the newspaper offices, the Griffin, and the Law Courts—is our old friend and colleague the Bounder.

I cannot walk from Ludgate Circus to the Griffin without meeting him. I see him stalking into Edwards', with solemn visage and weighty stride, for the momentous function of dinner. I see him with beaming countenance and abdominal "Haw, haw!" of full content, nimbly stepping out of Bower's, his "percentage restored" and his soul "satisfied in Nature." I see him striding gloomily with downcast eyes, hands

Fleet Street

in fob, and bludgeon under his arm, oblivious of the traffic and the world, wrestling in desperate conflict with the reluctant Muses, for a happy phrase or eccentric rhyme.

His Gargantuan figure is never absent from *my* Fleet Street. Were he to slap me on the back, I should say "Hello, Ned," as naturally as if he had never left us.

Ah me! how we get carried away from those by whose side we would have chosen to fight!

Happily, there is no settled sadness in the Bounder's ghost.

One of the earliest recollections I have of him is connected with a *tête-à-tête* dinner (the tater-tart came many years after) in one of the Fleet Street taverns.

We had finished our ample meal, when in came my old friend Tom Sutton, of

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the *Athletic News*, and seeing nothing but empty plates before us, cheerily invited us to dine.

I was about to explain the situation, when the Bounder, to warn me off, winking sideways, affably answered, "All right, old chap. I'll have a steak and a tankard of stout."

This he consumed, together with several accessories and supplements pressed upon his easy acquiescence by our genial host.

At last came the solemn moment

When the banquet's o'er,
The dreadful reckoning, and men smile no more.

Tom Sutton looked, and looked again, pulled his moustache, and called the waiter.

"I say," he protested, "there's a mistake here. We haven't had all this."

"Mistake, sir?" said the waiter. "No, dere vas no mistake, sir; I haf charge for dat gentleman all his two dinner. Dat gentleman always have two dinner some-times. No mistake."

"Two dinners? Why"—

But at that moment Tom looked across the table, saw the Bounder's huge frame shaking with inward chuckles, which rose to a roar as their eyes met, and then he paid and said no more.

The Bounder was of course the Mentor who introduced me to Bower's. I was "up" for a day, and of course we "signified the same in the usual manner."

"Albert," said the Bounder, "bring me a glass of *my* port—from behind the glue-pot."

I said I would take the same, and put down half a crown.

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Albert brought tenpence change.

As I counted it, I began, "I say, is this change"—

The Bounder, who had been watching, at once interrupted me. "Don't expose your untutored provincial ignorance," he said; "tenpence a time. Always have it with provincials. Tenpence left? Order another."

It was soon after the *Clarion* removed its headquarters to London, that I paid my first visit to the Cheshire Cheese, the primitive tavern, with "nicely sanded floor," which, in a dingy Fleet Street court, still rears its antique head in proud and successful defiance of the gimcrack modern amply-mirrored restaurant.

It was a damp, cold, miserable November night, and I had been tramping with the

partner of my joys all day through slush and mire in search of houses.

Looking in for letters at the *Clarion's* gloomy little office in Bouverie Street, I found Fay crouching disconsolately over a handful of expiring embers in the grate.

He had been ill for many weeks, and had been reduced to a painful diet of buns and milk, but yet, if he might not feast, he could still take an interest in other people's feasting. Doctors could not rob him of that comfort.

So he inquired with touching interest where we proposed to dine.

My Bosom's Lord, with native Cornish trend, asked where was food the cheapest.

"Tut tut," said the Bounder. "Are you blessed with an appetite, yet grudge its entertainment? Is dinner-time a time to think of thrift? Go to, woman. Do

you never give thanks? It is Saturday night. The Cheshire Cheese pudding is now on. Take this poor victim of your avarice to the Cheshire Cheese, and let him for once be decently fed."

"All right," answered my frugal spouse; "if it's the Board's orders, and the Board pays, I don't object," and with a laughing "Good-night," she prepared to depart.

But as we were crossing the threshold the Bounder stopped me. "Are you going to the Cheese?" he asked.

"I expect so."

"Hum! and I'm doomed to the bun-and-milk shop." His voice quivered as he spoke. Then suddenly—"No, hang it! I'll come with you. That doctor of mine is an ass. I'll try the pudding."

And he did—several times; though I, in robust health, could stomach no more than

one helping of the rich and bilious compound.

As we came out he walked on his heels and slapped his chest. "Haw! haw!" he said, "I never felt better in my life. That doctor is an ass. Bread and milk? Bah!" And he swaggered all the way down Fleet Street.

On the next evening I found him crouching again over the little fire in Bouverie Street. I could feel his "hump" as soon as I opened the door. He was very bad.

"What's the matter, old chap? Don't you feel well?"

"No," he said, very ruefully; "I'm very bad. You know, I begin to think my doctor is a fool. I've been trying this perishing bread-and-milk diet for nearly two months, and, upon my word, I never felt worse. Really, I've given this doctor a fair trial, but,

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hang it all, the fellow does not understand me at all !”

Oh the gaps left by the passing years in a man's little circle of friends !

Time was when the cordial hand-grip of friends met me in Manchester at every corner, and almost every face in the streets was familiar.

I was there last Christmas, and I walked for half a day without a welcoming voice or smiling countenance to greet me. I thought of them that I had known, and walked with, and drank and eaten with there, and desolation fell upon me. To stroll through the crowded, bustling thoroughfare was like walking through a graveyard at midnight. The buildings loomed upon my gaze like monuments of the departed ; and the only inhabitants I saw were spectres of the dead.

It was holiday time, and the passers-by were many. Their laughter sounded in my ears like the sobbing of wind through willows.

Then I fell into a cluster of survivors from the fray, a band of staunch and hearty friends of old, who took me by the hand and "trated me dacent."

"Well, I am glad to see you," said one; then another, then another, and all together in lusty chorus.

That was good.

Then they began to talk. "Do you remember being here with Tom Sutton on such a night? Ah, poor old Tom! His death was an awful shock!"

And. "You heard how Jones's two boys went down in the pleasure yacht? Jones has been out of his wits ever since."

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And so on, and so on, till I rejoiced to hear the signal of parting.

We'll have no more of these reminiscences of graves and worms and epitaphs. "Some grief shows much of love ; but much of grief shows still some want of wit."

LONDON'S GROWTH

Why, how nowe, Babell, whither wilt thou build?

I see old Holbourne, Charing Cross, the Strand,
Are going to St. Giles' in the Field.

St. Katerne, she takes Wapping by the hand,
And Hogsdon will to Hygate ere't be long.

London has got a great way from the streame.
I think she means to go to Islington,

To eat a dish of strawberries and creame.

THOMAS FREEMAN (1614).

"HOGSDON" has come to Hygate long since, as our friend Cartmel, wearily pedalling his bicycle through the up-piled accumulation of dingy streets that divide his slum from my elevated fastness, can sadly testify.

The Haunts of Old Cockaigne

Where will "she" be a hundred years hence?

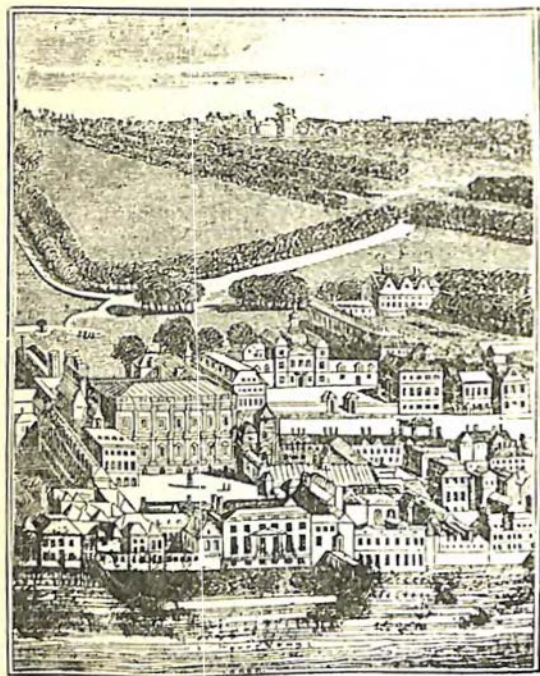
Where when "she" is finished?

I wonder.

James I. predicted that London would shortly be England and England would be London. Yet London in his time was literally the village that modern facetiousness calls it.

Little more than fifty years ago a magazine writer, bewailing London's vastness, declared that it must on no account be permitted to grow larger. The population was then less than a million and a half.

The monstrous growth which has taken place since then and the stupendous rate of present increase fill the thoughtful observer with dread. The problems of communication and distribution grow year by year more complicated and difficult.



WHITEHALL IN THE REIGN OF JAMES I.

The congestion of clever men attracted from all parts of the country by the glitter of the capital, impoverishes the provinces, and fills London with starving unemployed talent, much of which gradually degenerates into hopeless drunkenness, or still more degraded flunkeyism. The surplus artists, sculptors, writers, and actors stagnating and rotting in London would, and should, set up throughout the counties living, healthy, beneficial schools of art, culture, and general enlightenment.

The only comfort visible in the actual distortion is, that by its wholesale exaggeration of the evils afflicting the whole country, it will the more speedily bring a breakdown of the whole system, and so precipitate its own cure. Through the growth of population between 1866 and 1891 the "value" of land in London increased by £110,000,000.

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Ground in the City is sold at the rate of ten guineas per superficial foot. £16,000,000 a year is drawn as rent of land whose agricultural value is about £16,000 a year. That is to say, the people of London have to pay £50 every year for what would have cost, but for their own industry, only one shilling.

But these are matters for discussion in weightier works than mine. Here I merely skim the surface, and catch the superficial fact.

For instance, I observe that London's growth is steadily destroying London's picturesqueness. The embowered palaces of dukes and earls are giving place, more or less, to workmen's model dwellings; and the spots, such as Charing Cross and Tower Hill, where kings and princes were formerly decapitated in a gentlemanly way, never

London's Growth

rise nowadays beyond the breaking of the crowns of rude and clamorous agitators.

Nowhere, in short, is Democracy advancing so visibly as in London ; nowhere is it so



OLD HOUSE IN SOUTHWARK.

manifestly pushing back, and crawling over, and supplanting Aristocracy.

Southwark's palaces have been famous for hundreds of years. St. Saviour's Church, where the bones of Fletcher and Massinger

The Haunts of Old Cockaigne

and Edmond Shakespeare are laid, was built on the site of a church built before the Norman Conquest, from the profits of a ferry across the Thames. Anne Boleyn had an abode here, and hither rode the enterprising Royal Henry to walk and talk with her. Elizabeth came by water with the French Ambassador to see the bull-baiting in the building near the Globe Theatre.

A famous old London tavern, the Tabard, from which Chaucer's nine - and - twenty pilgrims started on their journey, stood near London Bridge within living memory. In Southwark too, until our time, stood the galleried inn where Mr. Pickwick discovered Sam Weller. In fact, Southwark was, until our time, full of historical associations, and once ranked amongst London's most fashionable suburbs. Now it is a labyrinth

London's Growth

of slums, and Barclay & Perkins' brewery occupies the site of the Bankside Globe Theatre.

The narrow thoroughfares between the Strand and the river, where modern pro-

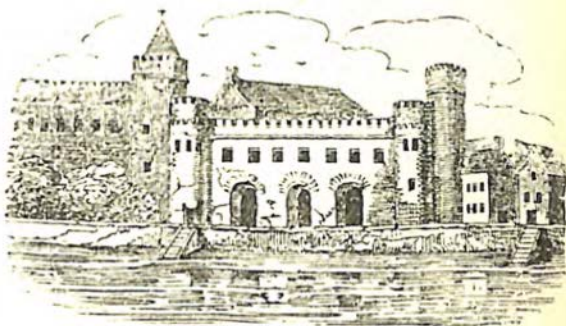


THE STRAND, 1660.

vincial visitors have their caravanserais, rustled once with fashionable satins and groaned under the weight of gilded coaches. Here dwelt dukes and earls and the pick of our nobility. Mark Twain, in *The Prince*

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and the Pauper, has pictured for us a Royal river pageant, such as many bright and flashing eyes must have beheld from the windows and steps of the palaces that lined the Strand or Middlesex bank of the Thames



THE STRAND, 1660.

between London and Westminster, for the king's town residence stood hard by in Whitehall; and thence to his country palace at Greenwich—Elizabeth's favourite "Manner of Pleasaunce"—the richly caparisoned and

silk-canopied State barges fluttered splendidly.

Now the stateliest craft that ride the Cockney surge are the rickety penny packet and dingily plebeian coal barge.

Soho, the dingy resort of foreign refugees, was formerly a district of great mansions, glimpses of whose former grandeur can still be distinguished beneath their present grime.

James the First's unlucky son, Henry, Raleigh's friend and the people's favourite, built himself a mansion in Gerrard Street, behind the site of the present Shaftesbury Theatre. Dryden lived in the same street, and here stood Dr. Johnson's favourite club, the Turk's Head.

Charles the Second's "natural" son, the Duke of Monmouth, the ill-starred, ambitious soldier who figures as the hero of Dryden's "Absalom," and who was beheaded, at the

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third stroke of the axe, on Tower Hill, had a palace in Soho Square where now stand gloomy warehouses ; and in the same square, Sir Cloudesley Shovel, Gilbert Burnet, and George Colman the Elder, formerly made history and literature where Crosse & Blackwell now make pickles.

The whole district is, as Bottom might have said with more than usual accuracy, "translated." It is become the stronghold and fastness of the foreigner and of his cheap and excellent restaurants.

Nowhere in the world are cheaper or more varied dinners to be had. The odours of the fried fish of Jerusalem here mingle with the perfume of the sauerkraut of Germany, and the cheeses of France and Italy ; and over all, blending them into one harmonious whole, serenely soars the powerful aroma of triumphant garlic.

London's Growth

This is but one of the phases of an amazing latter-day development of the Restaurant in London.

Shall I ever forget the horror of the



WHITEFIELD'S TABERNACLE : TOTTENHAM
COURT ROAD IN 1736.

first dinner I ever had in England? The Gargantuan slabs of semi-raw beef, and the bitter, black, treacly "porter," seemed to my mind certain signs that I had fallen among a race of savages and cannibals.

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But now, instead of the mean, dingy, dirty, fly-blown chop-houses that formerly mocked and balked London's appetite, we have a collection of marble palaces, in which daintily prepared repasts are retailed at lower prices than were formerly charged for the chop-houses' superannuated chunks of brutal flesh.

The Adelaide Gallery, one of the largest of these restaurants, has taken the place of a most respectable Gallery of Practical Science, and the Oxford Street store of the most democratic of wine-importers grows its cobwebs in what, fifty years ago, was accounted one of the most fashionable resorts in Europe. "Two thousand persons of rank and fashion," as I read in an old magazine, "assembled in the splendid structure" at its opening. And it *was* a splendid structure then, for the architect had introduced niches

containing statues of "the heathen deities," with "Britannia, George III., and Queen Charlotte" thrown in ! And now, I presume, they are thrown out—or rounded off into a perfectly harmonious circle perhaps, by a supplemental and complementary statue of Ally Sloper.

These tokens of Democracy's advance are not unpleasing ; the growth of the restaurant tendency affords one particular pleasure, as suggesting that the English are losing some of their dominant insular fault of sullen individualism, and are becoming more healthily disposed to the communal life.

Much less hopeful is the swelling grandeur of the London gin-palace—the modern substitute for the pleasant tavern.

In mediæval times, if the carle saw a stately edifice with stained-glass windows,

The Haunts of Old Cockaigne

statuary, and everything gorgeous, he would enter with reverence to stoop his head ; now, he goes in with fourpence to soak it.

In mediæval times he would be seen crossing himself with the holy water as he emerged ; now, as he comes out, he wipes it off on his coat tail.

In mediæval times, for their sins and sorrows and the glory of God, the nobles built cathedrals. In this more vulgar age, for the people's griefs and the lords' profit, England's nobility build glorified pot-houses.

In mediæval times, our chivalry won their knighthood and titles by spoiling the heathen at the sword's point ; now, they secure peerages by spoiling English men and women with adulterated and brutalising liquors.

London's Growth

This is what we call the progress of civilisation—

A rose by any other name would smell as sweet.

But that is neither here nor there.

A TRUCE FROM BOOKS AND MEN

Dreaming, dozing,
Fallow, fallow, and reposing.

DR. MACKAY.

THERE is an old Dutch pier at Gorleston separating the open sea from the mouth of the river that leads to Yarmouth. It is not ornamental; it has no pavilion, no railings, no band, but only capstans, tarry ropes, a small white-washed observatory, and—the most surprising jumble of odd, cosy, sheltered nooks overhanging the blue water, where one may sprawl all day in any garb and any posture, and, soothed by the sea's lullaby,

A Truce from Books and Men

blink at the sun, or, with the aid of our country's literature, go to sleep.

There is nothing to pay to go on, and our pier is therefore frequented by no objectionable persons. It is true there are a few mistaken damsels who sketch or paint the endless succession of spectacular marvels laid on by tide and clouds; but I think they mean no harm.

As for the apathetic individuals who come with bits of string and worms, pretending to catch fish, everybody knows that they never do; indeed, after observing them through several waking intervals, I have come to the conclusion that their only object is to politely aid our slumbers by the sight of their languidly deliberate preparations, and calm, leisurely hours of uninterrupted waiting.

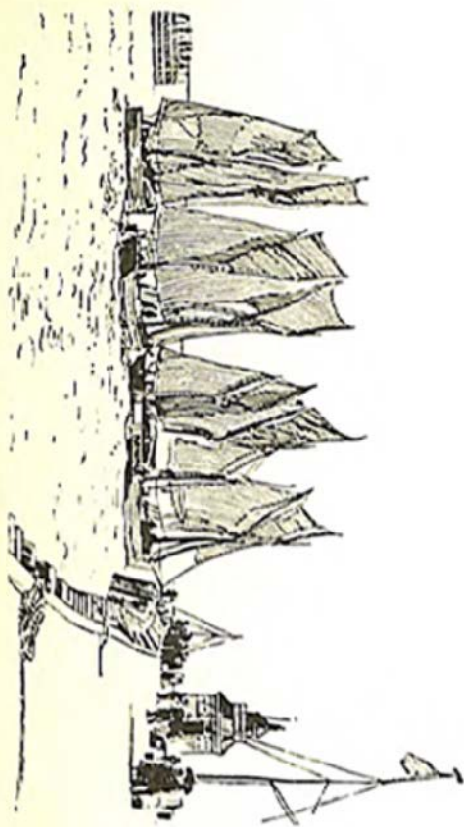
As for the rest of us, we are frankly,

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honestly, disreputably lazy, and dowdily, drowsily sprawl and dawdle the daily clock-round.

If the wind be southerly, we take our nap on the river side of the pier, and open our eyes at intervals to scan the fishing-boats with flapping sails, as they depart to or return from their two months' strife with wind and wave to reap for us the harvest of the sea. Every vessel in Yarmouth's swarming fleet must round this pier's windy point at coming in or going out, and cross the stream that swiftly flows and whirls beneath our feet. All through the day, in and out they pass, to and from their perilous work; late at night we hail and greet them as they glide with majestic sail through the reflected moonbeams, and disappear like huge, towering phantoms into the darkness and mystery beyond.

GORLESTON PIER.



A Truce from Books and Men

These, with a few timber-laden steamers from Norway—their shifted cargoes, sloping decks, and fearfully-listed hulls attesting often to the fury of the Baltic gales—are the only link connecting us with the far distant world of commerce to which we once belonged. These, and—I must not forget the great morning and evening events of our drowsy days—the two big passenger steamers that set out before breakfast for Clacton and London, and the two that heavily swing into the narrow channel at dusk, with ever fresh wonder to our awakened and densely assembled holiday population.

When the wind is northerly we shift over to the south side of our pier and face the Gorleston bay and beach. Lo, what a transformation! No trace of the workaday world remains. A scene of pure enchantment, of sunny brightness and rest.

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A semicircle of crumbling sandcliffs forms the background of the bay; and from the verge of a narrow streak of yellow sand, without a pebble, stretches the green, the blue, the yellow sea—nestling in its intimate nooks, splashing against the wooden promenade, or dashing with imposing affectation of fierceness over our promiscuously scattered breakwaters of granite.

We have one hotel, incongruously conspicuous on the neck of ground dividing sea from river at the pier's base; but we have no theatres, no music-halls, no punch-and-judy show, no niggers, no "amusements" (!!!) of any sort. We have a few bathing-machines upon the beach, and a vast picturesque camp of bathing-tents, but not any other sign of commercial enterprise. There is no esplanade to swagger on; no electric lights to set off our beauties by

A Truce from Books and Men

night; no illumination over all the "promenade" and mignonette gardens and pier after sunset, except the light of the moon and stars.

We *can* see the garish lights of Yahoo Yarmouth, flaunting through the night, two miles away; but, if we can help it, we don't.

.
The only thing we do with assiduity is bathing, unless we belong to the army of bare-legged water-babies who unceasingly "paddle" and build castles on the beach.

Sometimes we carry our day-dreams in small boats across the glistening sea, and lazily drift or tack before the languid breeze.

It has even occurred that foolish relapses into energy have borne us upon bicycles through leafy lanes to lazier Suffolk Broads; but these excesses are rare and brief. No man could face these sleepy inland waters and

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preserve an active spirit; the apathetic willows on the banks dreamily curtsey as if too tired to hold up their heads.

But let Dr. Mackay, who opened this chapter, also speak the last word—

There's a humming of bees beneath the lime,
And the deep blue heaven of a southern clime
Is not more beautifully bright
Than this English sky with its islets white,
And its Alp-like clouds, so snowy fair!—
The birch leaves dangle in balmy air.

A RUDE AWAKENING

Men must work and women must weep ;
There's little to earn and many to keep,
Though the harbour bar be moaning.

CHARLES KINGSLEY.

WHAT is this Life at all, and what its purport? Is Good its aim or evil? If roses be fair, what need of thorns? God sends youth and health and beauty; what devil brings sickness, grief, and decay?

When I wrote the irrelevant, drowsy chapter preceding this, the sun shone so kindly, and so benignly Nature beamed, that Care was as a dream of what never could have been.

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To live was to be blessed ; to think was to enjoy. Nature was a doting mother that fed us with bounty and kissed us fondly to rest ; the earth a sunny garden ; heaven a waste of luxurious fancy.

How blind I must have been ! What a glorious blindness it would be, if——

Ah ! “ If ” !

My drop from the rosy clouds began pleasantly enough. I was nooning by the river-side, when an ancient, second-hand Danish pirate, with improbable pantomime whiskers, like tangled seaweed, fixedly looking at the lower part of my waistcoat, casually remarked, “ Seems to me you’re pining away down there.”

“ Yes,” I answered briskly, “ I’m not the man I was.”

“ No,” said he meditatively, “ we’re none

of us as young as we was ; but, come, you can't be more than forty-three."

"I am," I answered indignantly, "no more than thirty-six."

"Well," said he, with what may have been a consolatory intent, "we can't help our looks, none of us. I'm judging you'll not be for the lifeboat when you're my age."

I had decided to speak to him no more, but an undefined hope to get the better of his sauciness prompted me to ask, "What age may that be?"

"Fifty-five," he answered.

"You look," said I vindictively, "a great deal older."

Scarce had the words left my mouth than I was ashamed of them. I saw for the first time now that he was crippled, and walked with a stick. Rough weather and a hard

The Haunts of Old Cockaigne

life had left on him a low-water mark of rust and wear and decay. But he answered, gently enough, "It's like enough I may. I've been very bad this three week. Got tangled in a rope and fell overboard, and was dragged ashore through the water from the pierhead to the harbour. My uncle and two other young fellows was in the boat, but"—

The "two other young fellows" was tempting, but I did not smile.

"They couldn't get me in," he continued unconsciously, "and I got knocked about a bit. My shoulder was main bad. I'm crawling about again, but it's hard work doing nothing."

I repeated the words to myself as I walked away, "hard work doing nothing"—especially when "doing nothing" means a bare cupboard and hungry children, eh?

A Rude Awakening

Gorleston is perhaps not altogether so cheerful as I thought.

Unsneck the door to Care and you might as well take it off its hinges.

Late the same night, I was talking to the watchman at the end of the pier. A Yarmouth fishing-smack sailed out into the gloom.

"Rough night," the watchman cried to the skipper.

"Ay, ay," replied a gruff voice from below ; and a moment later the smack was gone.

"Better here than on that boat to-night," I observed, as the black sail faded and merged in the black cloud.

"Ay," the watchman answered ; " but they'll see worse before they see home again. There's queer weather to be found on the Dogger Bank in an eight weeks' trawling. I mind me of three hundred and sixty drowned

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in one March gale, and upwards of two hundred lost two or three years ago one Christmas night. 'Then there's always the risk of collisions in the fog, men washed overboard in a gale, or crippled in the small boat when they put out, as they must whatever the weather, when the Billingsgate steamer comes round in the night for the fish."

"H'm! And what pay sends willing men to face these risks?"

"Penny an hour, from time they start till they get back. That's fourteen shilling a week."

"And when they come home?"

"Pay stops."

"God! how can their women and children live?"

"Nay, now you're asking something. But they're better off than them as waits ashore all winter, and can't get a job."

A Rude Awakening

"Fourteen shillings ! Why do they stand it ?"

"Because they can't help theirsels. 'There's too many waiting to take t' place o' them as has a job."

"Have they no trade union ?"

"They've trouble enough to keep theirsels in work ; who'd keep them if they went on strike ?"

"Fourteen shillings a week ! It's shameful."

"Happen it is, and happen the shame is not so much the men's as yours."

"Mine ? How ?"

"I suppose you buy and eat fish ?"

"Yes, and pay the price I'm asked ; if I paid twice as much, would the fishermen get the money ?"

"Nay, I don't know. We look to you clever folk in London to settle these things."

The Haunts of Old Cockaigne

They are not awe-struck by the superiority of the "clever folk from London," these outspoken men of the sea. From the taciturn solitary policeman, who looks on us with undisguised contempt, to the ancient mariners by the river-side, who gaze on us with the puzzled stare that a Viking might have cast on a French dancing-master, the natives give one the painful impression that they regard us as prodigies of ignorance and uselessness.

But—we have money. People who don't seem to know anything or to do anything always have. And they that have to wrest sustenance from the churlish sea at Gorleston, are disposed to do much for money—even to tolerate inquisitive, pompously patronising, incessantly cackling Cockneys.

I went down to the sea thinking to mend my tired body with the blow of the lusty

A Rude Awakening

spray, but I am judging 'twas perhaps my mind most needed change of air.

They are not so much our lungs that get stifled in the cities as our brains and hearts. We are so hemmed in with glittering shams and lies that we forget Truth's features.

What do we know of work and trade, we that scramble for gold dust in London? What do we know of Life, we that seek it in the perfumed mire and corruption of the West End? They are not the usurers and money-changers that make the wealth of nations, nor the painted splendours of Babylon that ripen our harvests, nor the swinish orgies of Sodom and Gomorrah that make the pulses beat with healthy joy of life.

One stews in London's vitiated atmosphere, and one forgets. One's perceptions grow numb, and dull and blunted; one's knowledge twisted, warped, awry. We are

The Haunts of Old Cockaigne

made dizzy by the rush and whirl, and cheated by specious shows and make-believes. Our days and nights are passed in fever, our thoughts are as the babbling of a grim delirium, and there is no health in us.

Contango? The odds for the Leger? The new ballet?

“We went out twice that night,” said the lifeboatman; “one of our men broke his arm th’ first trip, and he wur main wild when he couldn’t go th’ second time.

“And did you save them all?”

“Ay, we got ’em all off—both lots; though they’d give up hope. They couldn’t see us till we came close up to them, for it was a dirty night, and the sea was running high, but they heard the cheers we give them when we got within calling distance, poor things.”

A Rude Awakening

That makes a better picture than the Stock Exchange or Piccadilly Circus. The thought of the ships that sink, of the men and women and children that go down into the cold depths, "their eyes and mouths to be filled with the brown sea sand"—that is not good to think of. But the picture of the rescue, is not that glorious?

The sound of the human cheer across the roar of Nature's battle—think of it in the ears of the crew that had "given up hope"! The thrill, the gladness, the doubt, the eager look-out. The cheer again, clearer, huskier, certain now, and full of brave comfort. A chance then for life? A chance for the wailing women and the weeping bairns? Then a glimpse, deep down in the great trough of the sea, of a boat staggering and rolling amidst the waves, manfully propelled, perceptibly approaching, despite wind and

The Haunts of Old Cockaigne

sleet and drenching wave, with rough men's voices giving promise of life through the darkness of the storm!

Ah! gentlemen of the Spiers & Pond and money-making world, isn't it a brave picture to think of? The cooling dash of ocean spray is delightfully refreshing. To think that our race can still breed heroes; that even we, if we could or would but shake off the Old Man of the Earth that sits upon our shoulders, might perhaps be heroes too; that we too might risk our lives to snatch storm-tossed unfortunates from the clutch of death — is it not a blessed thought?

It is the custom of our age to boast of its civilisation. When we stand erect we fear to hurtle the stars with our foreheads as we pass under. We smile upon our accumulations of wealth and the monuments of our

A Rude Awakening

commerce, and esteem ourselves the crowning triumphs of evolution, the ultimate perfection, Nature's finished masterpieces. But how small, how mean, and how insignificant we Londoners look by the side of these stalwart and fearless fishermen of Suffolk and Norfolk.

They know nothing of Westralians, S. P. prices, futures, or the Sisters Bobalink's new dance; but what a lot they have to teach us!

.

The weather changes swiftly at Gorleston, and when the white foam-horses ride over the hidden sand-banks, even a Cockney-tripper may feel the sense of peril.

Ever since we came we have seen the gaunt masts of one wreck spectrally haunting our feast from behind the lightship in the east. Now there is another on a sand-bank

The Haunts of Old Cockaigne

close to shore, a little to the north of the river's mouth.

It had been a glorious day, but towards evening the storm-clouds gathered and the wind rose in fitful gusts. A Baltic steamer, clearing out of the harbour at dusk, blocked up the mouth of the river for some hours owing to a fouled anchor, till at last, her cable being cut, she succeeded in getting to sea.

Meantime, a Yarmouth trawler, returning to port with a week's catch of fish, was misled by the lights of the disabled vessel, and, manœuvring to get clear, backed on to the dangerous North Sand, whose floor is thickly strewn with remains of former wrecks.

From the pier, through the blackening night, we watched the crew's futile efforts to get off again. It was very like a fly's efforts to escape from a spider's web, and evidently

A Rude Awakening

as profitless. The more they struggled, the deeper in the sand they sank.

Now, boom ! through the night came the bang of a great gun. The Admiralty men in charge of the Board of Trade life-saving apparatus were about to begin operations. We saw lights flickering to and fro on the Denes—the low bank of land between the river and the sea. Presently, with a prodigious whiz, up to the black sky and across the ship shot the rocket, bearing the lifeline that would bring the shipwrecked mariners to land ! Before this, however, one of the five lifeboats maintained on this dangerous coast had been safely launched through the surf, and reached the wreck almost as soon as the line.

But neither line nor boat would the captain of the smack accept : to leave his ship meant loss of property, and property

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in England is of all things the most sacred.

The night by this time had become wild and fearful. The wind shrieked viciously; the waves broke ashore with a hungry roar; and from the swart clouds came down squalls of rain, merging land and lights and sea and sky in one blur of desolation.

There was no more to be seen. The crew of the stranded trawler deemed it safe to remain where they were. So we curious Cockneys, perceiving no hope of further fresh sensations, hastened us home to cosy beds and warmth.

.

I had just gone to sleep when a boom that shook the bed roused me with a start.

I jumped up and went to the window.

A signal-rocket had been fired from the coastguard station opposite our lodging.

THE LIFEBOAT.



A Rude Awakening

I slipped on some clothes and went out. The night was wilder than ever, the driving rain heavier, the wind louder, the sea rougher. I saw the coastguard-men bury themselves in oilskins, and sally out with lanterns to their station on the Denes. When they took boat to cross the river, I had perforce to leave, and so, wet through, went back to my bedroom window.

For hours I watched the fitful lights on the Denes, and the wavering light on the mast of the ship beyond. Once, in the staring light of a "flare," I saw her plainly—her stark, white, sloping deck looming ghostly through the darkness; then, another rocket-line went flashing across the black waste, and I hoped the crew were safe.

.
Next morning I learned from our land-lady's son that he had been all night in the

The Haunts of Old Cockaigne

lifeboat ; that despite the smack-skipper's first refusal to leave his ship the lifeboat had stood by him for hours, the waves washing over the stranded vessel the while ; that, at last, finding the skipper obstinate, the lifeboatmen had returned to shore, but had scarcely landed when the new view which isolation lent to his perilous position, caused the skipper to signal for their return. They went back accordingly, and at three in the morning safely landed the shipwrecked crew in Gorleston.

All through the next day, without rest or respite, the hardy young boatman unceasingly engaged on salvage duty. I accidentally heard, by the way, that on the previous day he had plunged twice into the sea from the breakwater to save two children who had fallen in—for which service he was munificently rewarded with five shillings.

A Rude Awakening

At night, in answer to a question, he told me, "Sometimes in winter we've been out as much as three times in one night, and been at it again the night after. You soon get used to it, you know."

H'm! I *don't* know: I only know that after that night I was laid up with a chill, whilst he made no more of his labours, his perils and exposure than if they had been part of a picnic; and I also know that when, in inquiring about my health, he wistfully struggled to tune his storm-tanned hardy face to a note of decent sympathy, he made me feel ashamed of my lubberly fragility.

Yet—tut, tut! Can I not win more pay for a nice little cackling article about his work, than this dreadnought will get for saving six men's and two children's lives?

Since everything is justly ordained in our

The Haunts of Old Cockaigne

best of all possible societies, my greater gain must prove, despite appearances, that I am this man's superior.

Besides, he speaks to me with manifest respect, and calls me "Sir."

A few nights later, there was another gale ; a trawler was driven ashore, and her crew saved by the rocket apparatus.

Two or three nights later a Lowestoft smack was run down by a Norwegian barque, and the skipper and mate were drowned ; one left a wife and four children, the other a wife and nine !

These casualties are happening constantly—they are so common they are scarcely reported, even in local papers ; but what becomes of the widows and orphans ?

A man's wages on the trawlers are 14s. a week, *when his boat is at sea*.

"They ought to be included in the

A Rude Awakening

Compensation Act," I suggested to a boatman.

"Who is to pay the compensation?" he asked.

I suggested the smack owners.

"Oh, they couldn't afford it"; they couldn't afford more wages; couldn't afford anything. They also were to be numbered amongst those deserving unfortunate classes of disinterested British capitalists who are living on their losses. Yet one doesn't hear of *their* starving in the winter, of *their* being drowned in quest of a precarious livelihood, of *their* widows and orphans being gathered into the workhouse. Nor the boatbuilders, nor the sailmakers, nor the Billingsgate "wholesalers," nor any of the men connected with the trade, except those who do the actual work of catching the fish.

Their poverty is apparent to all the world ;

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the difficulty of getting even a bare living by the fisheries is bringing competition for employment even into the lifeboat. Lifeboatmen may earn 30s. in a winter's night by going out to a wreck, and may get as much as £10 per man in one haul if they recover salvage. That is "big money" to fishermen; so it comes to pass that even that business is tarnished with a sordid taint.

"The coastguard had no business to fire their rocket-line," said a fisherman to me, speaking of the wreck above described; "we was in the water first and was entitled to the pay. Besides," he continued, following up a train of thought which is horrible to pursue, "they needn't be in such a hurry to take the bread from us lifeboatmen: *it's only half a crown each they'd get for firing the rocket.*"

A Rude Awakening

I heard ugly hints of vessels purposely cast away to recover insurance ; and I heard a well-dressed townsman, who spoke with considerable warmth, and evidently with knowledge, utter bitter sneers at the rapacity of certain boatmen who had “made salvage a business,” and who “always won their actions-at-law against the owners because counsel artfully worked on the jurymen’s feelings by glowing accounts of the men’s pluck and perils.”

“And do you deny the peril of the work ?” I asked.

“No,” he admitted, “it’s risky enough, but it pays better than fishing, and that’s about as risky.”

“You would not care to do it yourself, I presume ?”

“Not me !” he answered, with a chuckle ;
“I should hope I’d got a better mark on.

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But to make a ten-pound note, those beggars, why, they'd face hell!"

.

If there be a devil his name is Money.

Fresh from the hands of the gods, we are the exquisite instruments upon which they play divine music. But comes Money to play upon us, and the strings become jangled, harsh, and out of tune. If there were no money—if none were tempted for lack of it to sell themselves, if none were driven by excess of it to wallow in porcine gutters—how brave, noble, and lovable were Man!

The stock question that Yorkshire weavers ask of one another on meeting, is one we might fitly ask of our Civilisation, "What soorts are yo' makin' now?"

The nearer the knuckle of civilisation we seek, the less shall we find of the cool,

fearless, manly air of my Gorleston life-boatman.

Civilisation is not making those "soorts," Nature preserves the monopoly of manufacture; civilisation succeeds only in spoiling them.

LONDON PRIDE AND COCKNEY CLAY

From drinking fiery poison in a den
Crowded with tawdry girls and squalid men,
Who hoarsely laugh and curse and brawl and fight:
I wake from day dreams to this real night.

JAMES THOMSON.

SINCE I met the Lancashire excursionist at
Lowestoft I have been wondering what is the
essential distinction between the Cockney-
tripper and the holiday-maker one meets at
New Brighton, Douglas, or Blackpool.

We were tightly packed in the shelter on
the promenade waiting the end of the
thunderstorm. There were two native boys

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singing a temperance song to the tune of "There's nae luck about the hoose," translated to a dirge with a drawling refrain of "No d-r-r-rink ! no d-r-r-rink for me !"

This they would whisperingly sing, with stealthy inquiring glances at the people who pressed about them, and then hysterically giggle. But the stolid, respectable crowd of "visitors" from London, stiff with the recent dignity of seeing their names printed in the visitors' list (with "Esquire" at the end !) would not stoop to notice these frivolous ebullitions. They stolidly glowered with heavy impassive glare, oblivious, it seemed, not only of the boys, but also of each other.

Now this starchiness would not have been remarkable in Southport or Folkestone, where one meets so many pompous, old, superior persons, puffed up with the importance of their little pension, annuity, or snug, retiring

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hoard ; nor in Scarborough, where many visitors are genuine “toffs,” and naturally privileged to look down upon the common herd.

But this crowd at Lowestoft consisted unmistakably of the genteel working class—the clerks at £150 to £300 a year, the small shopkeepers, the—in short, the genteel working class.

In Lancashire this class, though disposed to a sort of blunt arrogance at home, become humanised when holiday-making. They will condescend to fuse with their “inferiors,” and when united, as in this case, by common misfortune, they will even condescend to be affable.

Not so the genteel workman of Cockaigne.

That he is a workman he never remembers ; that he is genteel he never forgets.

Even when he has divested himself of his

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customary frock-coat and tall silk hat, he remains still clothed with his cumbrous and sombre gentility. It is to him as valour was to his forebears. It serves him in lieu of honour or religion. His gentility is of his possessions the most sacred: rather than that, he would lose his honesty, his manliness, and his humanity.

The silence was broken by the irruption of a bustling newcomer, who, as he shook his dripping cap, cheerily cried, "Good Laur! it does come down!"

He looked round for acknowledgment, but the genteel gentlemen from London stonily stared into vacancy.

Undiscouraged, the newcomer took off his mackintosh, offered a jest about the weather, beamed cordially upon the crowd, and playfully cuffed the ears of the boy who demanded, "No d-r-r-rink, no d-r-r-rink for me."

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"All right," he said, "if you don't want any drink, you needn't cry about it. I'll take your share when the whisky comes."

Again he glanced round with an inviting smile, but the petrified images looked remote, unfriendly, melancholy, slow.

But this chilliness troubled him no more than a frosty morning troubles the jovial sun. He beamed and glowed and laughed and talked, and, despite themselves, the genteel glaciers thawed.

"That man," I said to myself, "comes from the North."

His next speech told of storms he had seen—at Blackpool! of seas washing over the promenade wetting him "three streets back."

One of the gentlemen from London cast a look of curiosity.

The man from the North went on to tell

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how he had taken a day's sail from Blackpool, and, being unable to land there at night, had been carried to Fleetwood, and thence back by rail after midnight.

"How was that?" asked the gentleman who had looked interested; "haven't they a pier at Blackpool?"

Fancy that to a Blackpoolite! It was as if one had asked a sailor whether he had ever seen the sea, a Scotch reporter whether he had tasted whisky, a French soldier whether he had ever heard the "Marseillaise," or a Southport man whether he knew what sand was.

It did my heart good in that strange land upon that cheerless day to hear the man from the North pour out his volcanic eloquence in Blackpool's praise.

I grieve to be compelled to admit that some of his statements struck me as

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inaccurate. For instance, I thought he was wrong in describing the promenade as ten miles long, and I think he was not justified in stretching the Tower to double the height of the Eiffel Tower in Paris.

I cast a glance of mild rebuke upon him when he added that the Winter Gardens were "something like the Crystal Palace, and Earl's Court put together," and I gasped when he represented Uncle Tom's Cabin as "a sort of shandygaff of Buckingham Palace and Olympia!"

I felt that if I didn't check him the man would rupture himself.

I touched him on the shoulder. "I have lived at Blackpool myself," I said.

"There you are," he continued, without turning a hair; "this gentleman will confirm what I'm telling you. Aren't all these South

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of England watering-places slow as compared with Blackpool ? ”

“ Well,” I said, “ none of them have such variety of amusements.”

“ If you want amusement,” said the Cockney gentleman who had offered the cue about the pier, “ if you want amusement, you should try Yarmouth.”

“ Yarmouth ! ” cried the North of England man, with an expression of superb disdain. “ Bah ! Yarmouth is vulgar ! ”

.

It was lovely ! After his praise of Blackpool it was sublime. I saluted him respectfully and departed with a soul full of awe.

For I had not then seen Yarmouth. On the next day I did.

Then my wonder vanished.

I had seen something of the Yarmouth yahoos at Gorleston.

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For the democratic price of twopence, steamers bring them up the river, past the teeming wharves and shipbuilding yards of the Yare, and belch them forth to stare upon Gorleston's "slowness."

Our placid Gorleston sun smiled on their hurry and pain with its customary calm complacency. Our lazy Gorleston sea rocked itself benignly with its usual hushing swish. Our deliberate Gorleston sea-gulls indolently flapped their wings.

And the Yarmouth yahoos yawned and hastened away in disgust.

.
But at Yarmouth, their feet are, as it were, upon their own wicket; their deportment was to the manner born.

See them shying at skittles or cocoanuts, gorging on stout and shellfish, bustling, breathless but roaring, from "entertain-

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ment" to "entertainment." How hot they look! how they perspire! and how they shout! Do they really amuse themselves? I wonder.

They all seek happiness, these good brothers and sisters of ours; but surely they run away from it that so distress themselves in its pursuit. To "get on," to "do" the utmost possible in the shortest possible time, to eclipse their fellows, to make haste and yet more haste, and ever more haste—that, in pleasure as in toil, is ever their aim.

For a right-down, regular, blaring, flaring, glaring, tearing, staring, devil-may-careing hullabaloo, Blackpool on August Bank Holiday is peculiar.

But between the Lancashire and the Cockney-tripper there is an essential difference which is not in the Southerner's favour.

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The Northern tripper may be rowdy, but there is a redeeming quality of broad joviality, good-tempered companionship in his razzling, that mellows and softens its asperity. But the Cockney-tripper, from his exasperating accent to his infuriating concertina, is aggressively, blatantly, harshly coarse. There is a self-sufficient "cockiness" about him that soars above all compromise and defers to nothing and to nobody. His profanity is more raucous and vicious than the Northerner's, his ebriety more ribald, brutal, and swinish. Armed with his customary concertina, or his still more harrowing occasional cornet, 'Arry is a terror to shudder at.

His 'Arriet, too, is infinitely coarser than the worst specimen of the Lancashire mill-girl.

The shrieking sisterhood of the flaunting

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feathers and marvellously beaded and bugled tippets, swagger along in serried bands, five and six feet deep. Arm in arm they come, lifting their skirts high in impudent dance as they lurch to and fro, giggling hysterically, and shouting vocal inanities with shrill and piercing insistence.

There is nothing more distressing in all England than the spectacle of these unfortunate persons in their hours of mirth. In all England there is no poverty more pitiful than the conspicuous poverty of their resources of pleasure.

To raise as much noise as they can, to make themselves as offensive as possible to the quietly disposed, to spoil natural beauties and break things,—these seem to be the aims of their enjoyment.

If they find a pleasant stretch of clean sand, where barefooted children happily

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disport themselves, they will fill the place with lurid profanity, and departing leave behind them a 'Tom 'Tiddler's heap of broken bottles, threatening the security and comfort of every playing baby in the neighbourhood. If they find a pretty flower-garden, where they are politely requested to "keep off the grass," they will deliberately and purposely trample on the sequestered patch, to prove their insolent superiority over regulations framed for their and the general public's profit and advantage.

Oh, but it is sad to see ! There is nothing more depressing, more crushing to one's aspirations for the people's greater and truer liberty.

The usurer's greed, the tyranny of upstart wealth, labour's subjection and dependence, poverty's hunger—all these may be cured ; but what shall be done with yahoos whose

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chief delight lies in spoiling the enjoyment of others?

Ah, me! I wish I had not been to Yarmouth.

MY INTRODUCTION TO RESPECTABILITY

It was a Sunday in London—gloomy, close, and stale. Maddening church bells of all degrees of dissonance, sharp and flat, cracked and clear, fast and slow, made the brick and mortar echoes hideous. Melancholy streets, in a penitential garb of soot, steeped the souls of the people who were condemned to look to them out of windows in dire despondency. In every thoroughfare, up almost every alley, and down almost every turning, some doleful bell was throbbing, jerking, tolling, as if the plague were in the city, and the dead-carts were going round. Everything was bolted and barred that could by possibility furnish relief to an overworked people.

CHARLES DICKENS.

WHEN, as a boy of ten (driven from Paris by General Trochu's proclamation before

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the siege as a *bouche inutile*), I first set my eyes on the world's metropolis, my impressions were not favourable. Ugh ! that first Sunday in London ! It was like a day of death, a day among the tombs.

What a change from the Paris of the Third Empire !

I had been suddenly translated from an airy, flower-festooned apartment overlooking the Luxembourg Gardens, to a dirty brick lodging-house in the Pentonville Road, with a soot-garden in front and a dingy penitentiary across the way.

Never before had I seen a brick house, soot-garden, or penitentiary ; and novelty for once failed to lure my youthful eye.

It was then that the purple-faced landlady in the rusty black gown assured my father that the place was "exceedingly respectable."

“What is that?” asked my elder brother John in French—“*c’est tres quoi?*”

“Respectable,” repeated my father.

“Respectable,” quoth John. “What we call *triste, hein?*”

And my father, who was ever grave as a tetrarch, smiled.

I knew only two or three English phrases then, such as “I am pretty and vell; how vos you?” “If you please,” “menny of zem,” etc. etc.

Never till then had I heard the British national word; and when my father explained that “respectability” meant “*une nature honorable*,” we boys looked out at the soot-garden and penitentiary, and marvelled why honour in London looked so dirty.

The next day was Sunday, and our landlady furnished us with the name of a “most respectable” church near Clerkenwell Prison.

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But John expressed a suspiciously fervent and pious desire to attend service at St. Paul's Cathedral, and when my mother looked hard at him he blushed. That settled it. I was ordered to put on my new Sunday boots, and go with him.

When we got outside, John took the precaution, by way of a start, to box my ears for being an artful little *mouchard*, and then set off as fast as he could go, with a view to leaving me behind.

His legs were long, mine were short, and I wore my Sunday boots. Besides, I was hindered by rude insular boys, who stood in my way pointing to my Parisian head-gear, and shouting barbarian phrases which I have since recognised as "Who's your 'atter?"

We ran, as I have since ascertained, through Euston Square, Tavistock Square,

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Bloomsbury Square, Bedford Square, twice round Russell Square, and then somehow got back to Euston. Then John stopped. The fact was he was lost. But he put a bold front on the matter, and said we would go and dance with the London 'prentice lads and fair-haired Saxon maids, first at Westminster and then at Tower Green. He told me he had seen pictures in which the youth of Britain, in gaily-coloured attire, were shown dancing round garlanded and festooned poles. He fancied the sports were held at Westminster. But was sure some were held on Tower Hill. Was I brave enough to join the venture and risk the after-part?

I was a nice, well-meaning boy, but before his dazzling array of temptations I fell at once.

John knew a little English—learnt at the

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Lycée St. Louis—but, as he confided to me after several interviews with the ignorant Londoners, these persons did not understand their own tongue ; and it seemed to take a long time to teach it them.

So we trudged again through the dreadful, dreary, desolate squares, with their carefully railed regulation patches of soot-gardens, and indefinable, uniform air of hypochondriacal blight.

I believe we should have walked round and round those grim and forbidding dwelling-boxes all day, had we not, after many attempts, discovered a man who knew a little French, and who offered to take us down to Westminster.

John asked him about the Squares. “Are they barracks?” he said, “or workmen’s dwellings?”

“*Mais, non,*” answered our guide, looking

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shocked, "they are the dwellings of the most respectable people."

Again that mystic word "respectable." Again the atmosphere of dignified dumps and dingy sulkiness. And father had told us that "respectability" was "an honourable nature." London honour seemed a sad thing.

The story of that day's spree ought to be published as a Sunday-school tract. It was the most chastening experience I ever underwent.

A few months later we were in the midst of barricades and street massacres in Paris; but even that weird experience has left no such impression of blank and heavy gloom upon my memory as the dismal reconnaissance into the London Sabbath and British respectability whereof this is the true account.

Those miles of deserted and colourless

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streets under the narrow glimpses of leaden sky, with the solitary heavy figure of the large British policeman everlastingly in the foreground—*mon Dieu!* in what clammy, icy bands of unrelieved wretchedness they strangled the exuberance of our boyish hearts upon that dull September Sunday!

Besides, I wore my Sunday boots.

The man who spoke French, or who, at least, understood some of John's English, left us at Charing Cross, and we went on alone to the joyous dance and revels of Westminster.

John had mentioned them to the man, so far as his resources would allow; but the man only shook his head and muttered something about Cremorne, which John explained to me, must be the name of the queen of the revels.

And when we got there—oh dear! oh

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dear !—frosty - faced, dun - coloured, British matrons and virgins with ivory-backed prayer-books were streaming out of the Abbey, and a drizzling chilly rain and mist had begun to fall over the scene, when John, distracted and discomfited, stumbled over the boots of the customary policeman.

“ *Milles pardons !* ” said John, lifting his hat, “ but ve seek vere ze girls and boys dance ze Sunday.”

“ Daunce ! ” replied the heavy policeman, “ daunce a’ Sundays? Nice, respectable little boys you must be, I down’t think ! ”

We didn’t understand all he said, but we heard the chilly word “ respectable,” and didn’t get warm again till we had run to the City.

To tell all the adventures of that terrible day would be to repeat, with variations, the tale I’ve told so far. The City finished our

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spirits. Even liquorice-water would not raise one's courage in these "catacombs with the roof off," as John aptly described the tomb-like streets.

And the Tower, which John had represented to me as a sort of Versailles or Fontainebleau, with fountains, flower-beds, and avenues on the exterior, and British lions, crowns, and a plentiful supply of beheaded traitors constantly on view inside, was the last straw.

It was, as the usual policeman told John, "closed on Sundays."

Then I fell upon a seat, repentant, and vowed I'd tell my mother.

Finally, we compromised, on my brother's promising to pay the omnibus fare home, for the which I was to declare that we had lost our way, and to deny that we had been upon the spree.

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I felt that I could do this without injury to my conscience, and when we returned to the soot-garden I did it.

John got a hiding all the same, and I didn't offer myself as a substitute; for my feet were very sore, and I felt that he was a wicked boy who deserved all the chastisement he could get.

In the days which followed, my understanding of "respectability" was much ripened.

There was another family in the house.

Its head was a fat old lady with corkscrew ringlets (I'd never seen corkscrew ringlets before), who sat everlastingly in front of the fire, like Patience in a hair-seated rocking-chair (I'd never seen a hair-seated chair before), toasting endless slices of bread (I'd never seen toast before). There were her two thin, middle-aged, maiden

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daughters, who were perfect types of the British old maid (and I'd never seen an old maid before). There was also a son, who washed up the pots, and occasionally went out into the garden to feed the hens, dressed in a pair of shabby gaiters, a rusty tall hat, and a cane.

The landlady informed us that they were a family of the highest respectability. They never paid any rent, and owed money to all the tradesmen in the neighbourhood ; but they always went to church on Sundays and were most respectable people.

My mother asked why the son didn't go to work.

"Work ?" said the landlady, with a pitying smile. "None of the Ropers were ever known to work. The family is too respectable."

There was another thing I saw for the first

time in that house, and that was a drunken woman.

The landlady, robbed of rent and food by the Ropers, who were too respectable to be turned out, had grown poor and dismal, and had taken to pawn her belongings for gin. I had never heard of gin before, nor ever seen a gin-palace. It was our landlady who bribed me for the first time to enter a London public-house—a flaring, reeking, typical London gin-palace. The sight and smell of the place filled me with a loathing which I have never forgotten.

But “here’s a penny for yourself,” said she, “and it’s a most respectable house.”

And that was my first introduction to English respectability.

No wonder that I preferred Parisian wickedness !

PARIS REVISITED

Other days come back on me
With recollected music, though the tone
Is changed and solemn, like the cloudy groan
Of dying thunder on the distant wind.

BYRON.

THE stock-in-trade of the ten-a-penny poets includes a serviceable allusion to the pleasure derivable from a re-visit, after a prolonged absence to a familiar scene of earlier years.

The wanderer, returning in a snowstorm, sees the dear old gables from afar, bathed in tender memories and moonshine. The snow lies in crystal heaps on the well-remembered

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window-sill; and the apple-trees in the back-yard are loaded with frequent blossom. The boats are darting o'er the curly bay, the nightingales are singing blythe and free, the little lambs on the icy peaks skip up and down the flowering willow, and the wanderer's aged parents are standing on their heads under the ancestral fig-tree.

And as the ten-a-penny poet gazes, enraptured, upon this pleasing spectacle from a conveniently adjacent mountain summit, his bosom heaves with many a joy, he flings his pack upon the grassy sward, and he too dances a festal hornpipe upon his head.

If admirers of ten-a-penny poetry had anything to think with, they would resent this crude and humiliating imposition.

I protest that the scenes of earlier joys are always, and in the nature of things, a delusion and a snare. That vast and luscious orchard,

Paris Revisited

so long and so fondly remembered, turns out to be no more than a scrubby clump of woe-begone bearers of tasteless, sapless pears and wooden apples. The main street that we thought so wide and grand and gay, is a narrow, dirty, straggling collection of dingy, fly-blown marine stores and reach-me-down contraptions. The toffee-shop—the Star of the East, that glorious palace of delight—is a ramshackle, tumbledown hovel, with a stock of sloppy, sticky, sickly brandy-balls, and soiled peppermints. The confectioner's—ah, woe is me!

When I lived in Paris, as a boy, what a mad, merry, reckless place it was! How admirably Offenbach set it to music in the rippling airs of *La Grande Duchesse*, which *tout Paris* then whistled and sang!

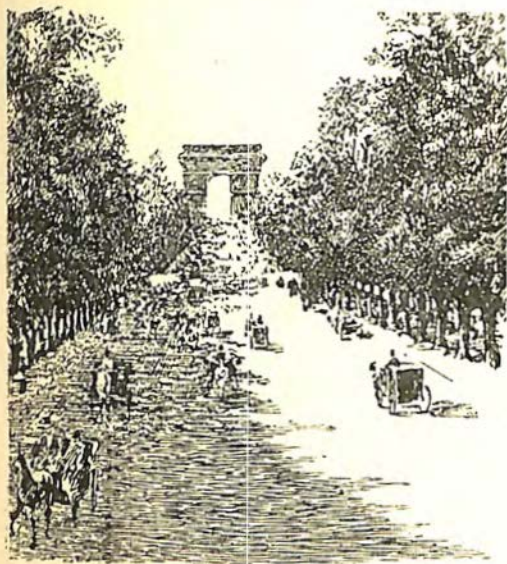
I think the sun in those days shone all the time, and Paris, newly rebuilt by Baron

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Haussman, glittered in bran new white and gold under a canopy of silky blue.

Offenbach translated it all — sunshine, staring new white stone, gilt railings and eagles, joyous crowds, laughing women, madly merry mirlitons, dazzling uniforms, splendid horses and carriages, imperial tinsel, bright silk skies, universal carelessness, recklessness, and intoxication. It is all in the music of *The Grand Duchess of Gerolstein*.

Then the Sunday picnics in the woods of Vincennes and St. Cloud! the *al fresco* dinner-parties at the suburban cafés! the jousting games upon the river, where we knocked each other into the Seine, to the joy of ourselves and all beholders! and the old dances—ah! who could forget the dances of the fête at St. Cloud? Men in shirt-sleeves, girls without hats, spinning like



THE CHAMPS ÉLYSÉES.

Paris Revisited

coupled tornadoes, heedless of time, heedless of all measure, heedless of conventions. If they desired to dance the waltz, and the band chose to play the polka, *eh bien*, "Zut," to the band.

And the band! If the dancers didn't care, it was *bien égal* to the band? *Parbleu*. Every blower blew his hardest, and arranged his time to his heart's content; every scraper scraped for novelty of effect, letting harmony take care of itself; and the drummer in his shirt-sleeves, contemptuous of all besides, spanked the sounding drum with a rollicking energy that put all other effects in the shade. How he did drum, that drummer! and smile, and cock his hat!

Then the great Exhibition of 1867, and my childish wonder and delight in its cosmopolitan crowds and dazzling prodigality of uniforms! By the same token I remember

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that my first literary attempt was a composition written at M. Duvernoy's Protestant School, in the Rue Madame, setting forth my impressions of a grand review upon a brilliant Sunday in the Bois de Boulogne, where three emperors and the Sultan of Turkey watched the manœuvres of what was then believed to be the finest army in the world; and I remember—these little things cling to one's memory sometimes to the exclusion of important events—how the Prince Imperial, Napoleon's ill-starred son, riding past our landau at the head of his glittering regiment in the Avenue de l'Impératrice, paused to smile at me, a boy little younger than himself, as my hat's protecting elastic hindered my salute.

Yet another radiant Sunday I remember, and a splendid cavalcade escorting Napoleon III, and the Sultan from the Palais

de l'Industrie back through the Champs-Élysées through the then spick and span, and glitteringly white Rue de Rivoli, to the luxurious Palais des Tuileries; and I remember how amongst the hurrahs and waving of hats, there burst out one loud "*A bas l'Empereur*," which caused the conqueror of Solferino to look furtively sideways under his heavy eyebrows, whilst his ubiquitous *mouchards* pounced upon the bold republican with their loaded sticks and dragged him off to jail.

But now when I visit Paris I see no more the pomp and glitter of unsurpassed opulence, nor splendour of architecture, nor infectious gaiety.

Scowling St. Antoine I see all the time—in the bullet marks left on the buildings from the Commune massacre, and in the

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faces and gait of the tired and melancholy Parisians.

The glitter of Haussman's buildings is faded, their whiteness tarnished, the whole place is like the scene of an orgie as seen by the revellers on the dismal morrow.

The books and pictures in the shop windows are infamous ; the plays in theatres and music-halls are unspeakable ; and the smells—ah, *mon Dieu ?* the smells !

Looked Paris so in '70 ? and smelt so ?
Pah !

My acquaintance with atmospheres is extensive and peculiar. I have essayed Widnes on a summer's afternoon ; I have sniffed the fiery soot, smithy cleek, and wheel swarf of Sheffield in August ; I have dwelt upon the fragrant banks of Irwell and within scent of Barking Creek ; but—a sultry day in Paris, ugh !

The narrow streets near the Halles may not smell as strong as St. Helen's, nor as loud as Widnes, but their perfume is more subtle, and like the famous patent pill of England it goes further.

When the hot season begins, people who regularly live thereabouts need no nutriment.

They live on the atmosphere—or die on it. And the state of the latter is the more happy.

.

Then the drapers' shops.

How is it that in the years that were earlier, I saw only fêtes and picnics? whilst now, when I accompany my Bosom's Lord on her periodical invasions of France—

Ah! yes, perhaps that accounts for it.

I accompany Madame to the Printemps, the Belle Jardinière, the Louvre, and the Bon Marché, to interpret her commands,

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and I climb everlasting staircases like a little white mouse in a wheel.

How I perspire — *dame!* how I perspire!

One day in a great magazine of Paris a small grease spot will be found upon the carpet, and someone will approach and say, "*Tiens donc*, this grease spot; what is it?"

And they will call Mr. Stirlock Roames, the detective, and he will say, "Ah, it is the remains of a great dramatic critic. By my process of induction I perceive that he was a remarkable genius, and owned a yellow dog with a gift for solo leapfrog. He had one fault: he was too good. If you bring me a small piece of blotting-paper and a flat iron I will pick him up."

And the grease spot will be removed to Westminster Abbey, and the readers of the

Clarion will wear sackcloth and ashes ever after.

.....
Ah! *mon Dieu!* These shops!

"Ask the man," says She who must be obeyed, "to show me an accordeon-pleated plain bell-skirt with a deep hem and shallow basque of glycine velvet, shirred with a shallow round yoke of fine guise guipure, and broadly turned back lapels of material to match, and ample Marie Stuart sleeves of white satin mounted on lace, braceleted with a band of silver and pearl-embroidered satin slashed to the elbow."

A college of professors of languages, armed with a library of technical dictionaries would be compelled to give it up.

But I dare not.

If I confessed myself unable to translate this wholesale order offhand into current

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Parisian, Madame would denounce me as an impostor on the spot.

Therefore I translate it for her, but I work it on a system. Thus—

I turn nonchalantly to the shopman, and observe briskly in French, "Of all sad words of tongue or pen, the saddest are these, it might have been."

Madame, who doesn't understand a word, nods her head in corroboration like a Chinese figure in a tea-shop window, and repeats "Wee-wee," which, as regards French, represents the whole of her little lot.

Whatever the topic, whatever the emergency, she always says "Wee-wee." One would think that sometimes when she had laid it out in one speculation unsuccessfully, she would feel discouraged and deterred.

But lor! nothing discourages that diminu-

tive but remarkable woman. I have tried, and I know.

So whenever, in Paris, opportunity occurs to put in a word, Madame sails in hopefully and spreads out her "Wee-wee" as confidently as if it were the ace of trumps.

Whereupon the shopman looks perplexed. "*Mais, M'sieur,*" says he, shrugging his shoulders in pretty apology, "*je ne comprends pas.*"

It is a shame to abuse his gentle, smiling good-nature and affability, but, what the good year! self-preservation is the first law of Nature. My business at this crisis is not to bandy compliments with a polite shopman, but to snatch my acquisitive Bosom's Lord as swiftly as it may be from bankruptcy.

When the shopman says he does not understand me, I pepper him at once with another staggerer. "*Milles bombes!*" I

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cry, "what have you done with M. Zola?"

"M. Zola!" he exclaims, looking pathetically bewildered; "*Vraiment, M'sieur*, I do not know."

"You're quite right," I answer meditatively. Then, turning to Madame, I explain: "Sold out. Empress of China sent for the last this morning. Fresh cargo expected from Patagonia in the spring"; and hastily grabbing her umbrella I snatch her out of the shop before she can say "Wee-wee."

It worked very well at first. Then she got in the way of grabbing her umbrella in her own hand at the critical moment, and when I turned to go she would say, "Yes, I know what you are going to say, my dear; they're sold out again. It must be, as you suggest, the curious custom of the country."

But do not be discouraged; ask him whether they have any alpaca skirts with dotted foulards in two-inch wristbands of shot moiré gussets and squashed strawberry ruchings to the sleeve, rosettes of guipure and bronze-powdered swordgrass flounces with Imogen ruffles round the waist."

Then the situation complicates itself; it becomes needful to prepare the *grand coup*.

I approach the shopman with a determined air, and with faltering speech, and eyes that wildly glare; I give it him in French, as thus—"Look at here, young fellow, unaccustomed as I am to public speaking, I say that drink is a curse."

He looks surprised, and shrugs his shoulders again as if once more to apologise.

"Then bandy words no more with me," I

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cry ; “ for slaves cannot breathe in England ; if their lungs receive our air, that moment they are free ; they touch our country and their shackles fall.”

“ *Mais, M’sieur,*” he begins, but ere he can think of his little piece, I pour into him another broadside—“ O native isle,” I cry, adopting now a friendly, engaging, and rhapsodical air, “ fair freedom’s happiest seat ! at thought of thee, my bounding pulses beat ! For what country has such work-houses, such gin-palaces, such company promoters, such Sunday clothes, and such respectability ? ”

He shakes his head, a little impatiently perhaps, and again begins, “ *Mais, M’sieur*”—

“ Yes, I know what you would plead,” I interrupt, “ but *milles tonnerres !* is not your proprietor a lantern-jawed, spider-legged, hump-backed, knock-kneed, flat-

footed, swivel-eyed, chowder-headed old Paty du Clam?"

Then his politeness gives way and the poison begins to work on him. He foams at the mouth and jerks out little broken bits of hissing and gurgling words.

"Come, come," I continue in a placid and wheedling tone, "you must admit his eyebrows are like birds' nests, his teeth like tombstones, and his hair like whiskers on broomstick. Now, even at his time of life, why should he not try to wash himself?"

That lets my poor friend out. He rolls his eyes, claws the air, and spits fire, till at last my Bosom's Lord, who has been unconsciously smiling and dropping bland "Wee-wee's" at ill-sorted intervals throughout the conversation, imperiously demands to know what is the matter.

"Oh, nothing!" I explain; "only the

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gentleman wants to know whether you are a Kaffir collector of curiosities or a Hottentot marine store-dealer, that you should ask for a thing so many years behind the fashion. He says you've no more notion of style, my Queen, than a superannuated Dutch scarecrow with cheap false teeth and a father who worked for his living. He says"—

But that lets *her* out. She turns upon the gasping foreigner as if with a view to fell him, but realising at last the pathetic inadequacy of "Wee-wee" as a conversational medium, she speechlessly grabs her umbrella, and with eyes flashing lightning, rustles out.

As she is too excited to notice me, I seize the opportunity to apologise to the shopman.

I explain to him that we are English.

"Ah!" he says, shrugging his shoulders. No further explanation is required.

I have said.

It seems mean, but no other means may serve. Once let a woman get a footing in a Paris draper's shop, and all is lost.

Par example—to show you the system. A woman enters one of these vast magazines where the insidious, perfidious, meretricious merchandise of Paris is displayed on countless counters, in storey after storey.

Suppose, after sampling all the stock, she asks for a ha'pennyworth of pins :—

“Ha'porth o' pins? Oui, madame,” says the shopman. “Would madame deign to give the address to which I must send them? No, madame, it is not worth the trouble to pay now. If you desire to pay, why not pay when the goods are delivered, madame?”

And, bowing madame out of the shop,

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he politely sweeps the floor with his hair.

On the next day the pins are delivered at Madame's address in the suburbs, by two handsome men in uniform who drive out in a handsome van. Madame uses the pins for a few days, and decides that she can do without them.

Next time she passes that way she calls in the shop, visits the refreshment department, where refreshments are dispensed free of charge, lolls awhile on a sofa in the reading-room, where the newspapers are kept for the use of customers, retires to the writing-room, conducts her day's correspondence on stationery provided by the establishment, and finally, as she is passing out, informs the cashier that she has bought something which she desires to return.

“Oui, madame,” says he, “what address?”

She gives her address, and the shop-walker, as he bows her out, sweeps the floor with his nose.

Next day come the two handsome men in uniform with the handsome carriage, to fetch the pins; on the day following they come once more to return the money, and when the lady has pocketed her halfpenny again, they politely raise their caps and say, “*Merci bien, Madame.*”

.
What is the natural result of these things? When a Parisian wife is not foraging in the shops, she is in her bedroom trying on the plunder. She has all the new fashions sent home to her, tries them on, and sends half of them back. The other half, which she never would have seen but for

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this tempting convenience, are kept and have to be paid for.

It is thus that Parisian husbands are reminded of their wives' existence. If it were not for the bills, I think some of them might sometimes forget that they were married.

It occurred the other day, that my interpretation of the French failed of its accustomed success.

At Madame's request, I had asked a shopwoman at the Samaritaine, the price of a pennyworth of ribbon ; but, after I had spoken, Madame demanded to know what I had said.

"I asked her, my Queen, what was the price?"

"Price of what? Price of a kiss?"

"No, my Sultana ; price of the ribbon."

"What was it you said about a kiss?"

"I didn't mention a kiss, my Empress."

"Yes, you did; I heard you."

"No, my Juno, I said, *Qu'est ce que c'est?*"

"Ah? 'Kiss Kissay.' That was what I heard. How do you spell it?"

She produces a pocket dictionary, with whose aid she designs during the next few days to learn the French language, and I am obliged to spell out my remark while she dubiously translates it word for word. The literal translation comes out thus—

FRENCH—*Qu'est ce que c'est?*

ENGLISH—What is this, what this is?

"'What is this, what this is'? Madame solemnly repeats; "is that all you said to the girl?"

"Yes, my dear, it is a 'French idiom.'"

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“I am glad,” says she, “that it is no worse. It is a mercy I did not let you come to this place by yourself.

“Let us get home to London.”

And I am thankful to be able to add that we get.

